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BARBARISM, POGROMS, AND LAWLESSNESS:
THE JEWISH RESPONSE TO LYNCHING AND RACE RIOTS IN THE JIM CROW ERA

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ABSTRACT

While there has been much scholarship on the relationship between the Jewish community and Black community during the civil rights era, this relationship began much earlier. The foundations were laid in the Jim Crow era, when the Black community experienced the scourge of lynching and race riots. The way that Jews responded to these incidents sheds light on the Jewish-Black relationship prior to the civil rights movement, as well as how Jews saw themselves in the American racial hierarchy. This thesis seeks to uncover key moments in the history of the Jewish response to lynching and race riots, as well as to analyze what those responses say about the nature of Jews in those periods. This paper splits the lynching era into two phases based around 1915, which is when Leo Frank was lynched. It will trace how the rhetoric of barbarism was adapted for various purposes based on how Jews perceived their own safety. It also discusses how Jews responded to the parallel between pogroms and lynching in every era: Jews disagreed with the parallel when they tried to advocate for the Jewish victims of pogroms or when they wanted to be seen as white, and they agreed with it as a strategy for defending against antisemitism and when they spoke out against anti-Black racism. The primary sources used to explore this topic came from digitized Jewish newspapers.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2021, a movie called *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* was released, which told the story of Holiday's defiant act of singing "Strange Fruit." The song "Strange Fruit" became an anti-lynching anthem, with lyrics like "Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze/ Strange fruit hangin' from the poplar trees."¹ The movie detailed how the United States government tried to prevent Holiday from performing this song, yet she continued to sing out. A *New York Times* article about the movie describes the continued relevance of "Strange Fruit" in the twenty-first century: "As the nation continues to reckon with a series of killings of unarmed Black people by the police—often captured in gruesome footage of Black men being shot or, in the case of George Floyd, knelt on by white officers—'Strange Fruit' has maintained its place in the national conversation about racism."² Many have referred to the George Floyd murder and other similar violence as present-day lynchings, linking the deaths of Black people at the hands of police to the history of violent racist bigotry that has persistently plagued the American nation.³

In the article about *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, it was noted that the writer of "Strange Fruit" was a man named Abel Meeropol (1903–1986), who was a white, Jewish man from New York.⁴ He had written the song in response to the 1930 lynching of Thomas Shipp and

¹ "Billie Holiday: Strange Fruit Lyrics," Genius, accessed February 26, 2022, <https://genius.com/Billie-holiday-strange-fruit-lyrics>.

² Bryan Pietsch, "Behind 'Strange Fruit,' Billie Holiday's Anti-Lynching Anthem," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/25/arts/music/strange-fruit-united-states-v-billie-holiday.html>.

³ Deneen L. Brown, "Violent Deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor Reflect a Brutal American Legacy," *National Geographic*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/history-of-lynching-violent-deaths-reflect-brutal-american-legacy>.

⁴ Meeropol was an English teacher at DeWitt Clinton High School. He was a member of the Communist party, and adopted the two sons of the Ethel and Julius Rosenberg after they were executed. Elizabeth Blair, "The Strange Story Of The Man Behind 'Strange Fruit,'" *NPR*, September 5, 2012, sec. Music News, <https://www.npr.org/2012/09/05/158933012/the-strange-story-of-the-man-behind-strange-fruit>.

Abram Smith in Marion, Indiana.⁵ This is interesting because of the unexpectedness: that the lynching anthem, a song that spoke out against the oppression of the Black community and sung in protest by Billie Holiday, was written by a Jewish man.⁶ This interest in Meeropol's story is related to our culture's fascination with the idea of Black-Jewish relations. In her book *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century*, Cheryl Lynn Greenberg says:

The topic of black-Jewish relations in the United States is not merely a subject for quiet intellectual study, however. It has a presence in American public culture that 'black-Greek relations' or 'Jewish-Presbyterian relations' generally do not. Stories about the subject enjoy wide circulation even in the nonblack, non-Jewish press.⁷

Thus, the fascination with this part of the "Strange Fruit" story is part of a wider cultural trend. However, this was neither the first nor the last time that a Jew wrote something commenting on the brutal phenomenon of lynching. The aim of this thesis is to uncover the notable moments in the history of the Jewish response to lynching and race riots during the Jim Crow era. I also aim to piece together the reasons for these responses and what these responses say about the Jewish conception of race and about the Jews' relationship to the Black community.⁸

⁵ "On August 7, 1930, a large white mob used tear gas, crowbars, and hammers to break into the Grant County jail in Marion, Indiana, to lynch three young Black men who had been accused of murdering a white man and assaulting a white woman. Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith, both 19 years old, were severely beaten and lynched, and 16-year-old James Cameron was badly beaten but survived." Cameron went on to become the founder of America's Black Holocaust Museum. "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror," accessed January 16, 2021, <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>; "Dr. Cameron: Founder Lynching Survivor - America's Black Holocaust Museum," accessed February 26, 2022, <https://www.abhmuseum.org/about/dr-cameron-founder-lynching-survivor/>.

⁶ This was not the only piece of creative writing on the topic of lynching written by a Jewish person. There is Joseph Opatoshu's famous Yiddish short story called "Lintsherey," Paul Peters and George Sklar's play "Stevedore," and Alfred Uhry's musical about Leo Frank called "Parade."

⁷ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁸ It is important to note that Black Jews and other Jews of color have always existed. Yet in America during the Jim Crow era, the population of Jews of color was extremely minimal. Jews of color today have been an important part of conversations about race within the Jewish community. However, for the purposes of this paper, Jews of color did not make a significant factor. Thus, when I refer to Jews, I am speaking about white Jews, and when I refer to Black people, I am speaking about non-Jewish Black people.

Background on Lynching

A report on lynching by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) says that “terror lynchings” were at their peak between 1880 and 1940.⁹ They came about as a reaction to Reconstruction after the Civil War, when many in the American South promulgated “Jim Crow laws and racial segregation—[as] a tactic for maintaining racial control by victimizing the entire African American community.”¹⁰ As Reconstruction ended, the federal government defaulted on its obligation to enforce the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, which freed the enslaved Black people and granted them full citizenship. The result was a reign of violence and terror that was used to restore the rule of white supremacy. Social segregation provided Southerners with a substitute for legalized slavery. For Southerners (and, in some instances, Northerners), lynching served as a brutal tactic designed to terrorize, intimidate, and cow Black Americans. Oftentimes these lynchings became a public spectacle, where viewers were invited to attend as if the event was a party or a celebration. In other instances, the perpetrators carried out community lynchings, where an entire group of people were attacked. These lynchings caused many Black people to flee the South, and this contributed in part to the Great Migration of Black people into Northern cities. Nearly a quarter of the lynchings of Black men in the South were based on accusations of sexual assault. About 30 percent of lynching victims were accused of murder. But regardless of the pretext for the violence, lynching was used as a tool by white people to wield racial control over the Black population.

The lynching era ended around 1940, although there were certainly lynchings after that date. Manfred Berg, author of *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America*, notes that the end of the lynching era did not mark some moral shift in the American culture. Rather, two

⁹ For more information about the EJI, see <https://eji.org/about/>.

¹⁰ “Lynching in America.”

things led to the decline in lynching: stricter enforcement of the law against both lynchers and criminal suspects and the expanded use of the death penalty. Thus for the Black population, the end of the lynching era was not necessarily an end to violence against that community. This violence just shifted from mobs to law enforcement.¹¹

In its study of lynching, the EJI distinguished between terror lynchings, which were “acts of terrorism ... carried out with impunity,” and instances of racial violence and hate crimes that were “prosecuted as criminal acts.” Berg, on the other hand, distinguishes between lynching, race riots, and hate crimes in a different way. He distinguishes lynching as “an act of communal punishment,” hate crimes as “random acts of violence against racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities without the pretext of punishing a particular crime,” and riots as instances of “large-scale collective violence in which the participants make no claim to be agents of justice.” That being said, Berg admits that “it is often difficult to draw clear lines between hate crimes, riots, and lynchings.”¹² This paper deals with both lynching and race riots. The line between race riot and lynching is not so clear, as Berg mentions. Many lynchings involved riots, and many riots, such as the Atlanta and Springfield riots, either ended as lynchings or were instigated by lynch mobs.

Relationship to Jews

Historically, the relationship between the Jewish and the Black communities has been an area of significant cultural interest.¹³ There are many parallel narratives of oppression and

¹¹ Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America*, The American Ways Series (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 164.

¹² Berg, ix–x.

¹³ “The topic of Black-Jewish relations in the United States is not merely a subject for quiet intellectual study, however. It has a presence in American public culture that ‘Black-Greek relations’ or ‘Jewish-Presbyterian relations’ generally do not.” Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters*, 1.

freedom shared between the two communities, and there have also been many periods of tension. Although many are familiar with the important role Jews played during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, there is a tendency to overlook the fact that there were Jews on both sides of racial debates. On one hand, there were Jews like Rabbis Stephen Wise and Emil Hirsch, who were so appalled by the cruelty that Black people suffered during the Springfield Riots of 1908 that they cried out for the creation of an organization that would address American racism. This led to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). On the other hand, many other Jews were apparently indifferent to the rash of anti-Black riots and terrorizing techniques that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁴ Understanding the relationship of Jews—a religious minority—to the cruelty inflicted on the Black community and other racial minorities creates a more nuanced picture of Jewish commitment to the rights of minorities in America.

The Jewish community became more prominent after the Civil War, with an established population of Central European Jews. The relationship between Jewish and Black communities became significant only after the immigration of Eastern European Jews after 1880. While these Jews immigrated to the Northeast, Black communities were moving into the same areas because of the Great Migration.¹⁵ The convergence of these two communities produced a complicated dynamic.

¹⁴ There is also scholarship on the relationship of the Jewish community with the Asian-American community. Ellen Eisenberg's book "The First to Cry Down Injustice?" discusses how Jews basically ignored the internment of people of Japanese descent during World War II. Jews had a similar silent response to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Hasia R. Diner, "Multiple Outsiderness: Religious, Ethnic, and Racial Diversity in America," *Contemporary Jewry* 24, no. 1 (2003): 41; Ellen Eisenberg, *The First to Cry down Injustice: Western Jews and Japanese Removal during WWII* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

¹⁵ Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters*, 16.

The lynching of Leo Frank, a Jewish man, further complicated how Jews related to this topic. This case, in which a form of oppression traditionally used against Black people was used against a Jew, changed how Jews related to the topic of lynching and affected the relationship between the Jewish community and the Black community. It also illustrated how the pressure from other white communities affected how Jews perceived and behaved toward the Black community.

Scholarship Overview and Methodology

As noted above, there have been many studies on the relationship between the Jewish and Black communities, as well as some scholarship on the relationship between Jews and other minority communities. One significant recent work in this area is *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* by Cheryl Lynn Greenberg. Greenberg focuses on Black and Jewish civil rights agencies to show how these two communities were brought together as allies and subsequently became divided as racial, ethnic, and class competitors. She argues that the reality of the “golden age” of Black-Jewish relations was the historical convergence of Black and Jewish overlapping goals, and divergent visions weakened the alliance. However, Greenberg’s work begins in the early years of the twentieth century and focuses on organizational relationships, so she does not specifically discuss lynching or race riots of this era at length.

Hasia Diner’s book *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915–1935* is the only work that discusses the topic of Jewish responses to lynching and race riots in a significant way. She looks at the Yiddish press and the English press separately, in two chapters called “‘The Souls of Two Nations’: Images of Blacks in the Yiddish Press” and “‘To Fight

Their Battles’: English-Language Jewish Magazines and Images of Blacks.” In each of those chapters, she includes a discussion of what those newspapers say about lynching, race riots, and other racial violence against the Black community. This research will build upon Diner’s work by increasing the scope. Diner limits her research to the years 1915–1935, whereas the period of lynching started much earlier and extended later. Additionally, 1915 was the year of the Frank lynching. Diner discusses the Jewish reaction to lynching after the Frank case, yet there is room to discuss the Jewish response before that event and to compare the responses before and after 1915. Diner focuses on newspapers with a broad readership, such as the *American Israelite*, the *Occident*, and the *Menorah Journal*. This research intends to go beyond those publications and utilize digital resources that provide access to many local Jewish papers.

There have been many works dedicated to the Frank lynching. In particular, I have relied upon Leonard Dinnerstein’s seminal work *The Leo Frank Case*. Two other works in this area contain a significant discussion of the relationship between Jews and Black people in light of this event. The first is a book by Jeffrey Melnick titled *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South*. The second is an article by Eugene Levy titled “‘Is the Jew a White Man?’: Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913–1915.”

Two other works discuss the Jewish response to lynching and race riots as part of a larger history of Jewish-Black relations. The first is Eric Goldstein’s *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. Goldstein does not have a chapter dedicated to this subject, but he uses Jewish writings about this subject as examples throughout the book. The article “Black-Jewish Relations in the Opening Years of the Twentieth Century” by Philip S. Foner provides a significant discussion of the relationship between the Kishinev pogrom and the Atlanta riot.

Overall, this subject has been discussed in a piecemeal way to shed light on the important issues that have shaped the history of Black-Jewish relations in America. This paper strives to construct the narrative of the Jewish response from the beginning of the lynching era in the 1870s and 1880s, which is farther back than Diner or Greenberg go in their books. This means identifying significant events in the intersection between Jewish American history and the history of lynching and race riots. I will also analyze the language that Jews used to discuss this subject and track how the language changed over time.

Diner points out that this area of scholarship is in the genre of cultural history, which is “a case study of the historical implications of the meaning of words.” She says that in the field of cultural studies, the way a group of people sees another group actually tells us more about how they see themselves.¹⁶ Thus a study into how Jews perceive the practice of lynching or the outbreak of race riots actually tells a great deal about how Jews viewed their own place in America’s racial and religious landscape.

This study will focus on Jewish attitudes toward the lynching of Black people and race riots as reflected in the press from 1877 to 1940. It strives to gain a better understanding of what Jews said about the issue of Black lynchings and race riots during this era. Did this issue occupy a central space in the concerns of the Jewish community, or did it exist on the periphery? Understanding these issues will create a deeper understanding of the Jewish experience in America, as well as a fuller picture of the way violence and racial prejudice have functioned in American history. It will also determine if Jews believed that their own rights and their own security was tied to the rights of other minorities. Did Jews identify with the plight of Black

¹⁶ Hasia R. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks; 1915–1935* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), xii–xiii.

people during this era, or did they believe, as historian Gil Ribak quoted, that “Negroes must not be likened to Jews”?¹⁷

The primary sources mainly came from digitized English-language Jewish newspapers, including Cincinnati’s *American Israelite*, Richmond’s *The Jewish South*, Philadelphia’s *The Jewish Exponent*, New York’s *The Jewish Messenger*, *The Jewish Voice*, and the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, the Cleveland *Hebrew Observer* and *The Jewish Review*, Chicago’s *The Reform Advocate* and *The Sentinel*, Denver’s *The Jewish Outlook* and *The Denver Jewish News*, Houston’s *The Jewish Herald*, Minneapolis’s *The American Jewish World*, Pittsburgh’s *The Jewish Criterion*, the *Buffalo Jewish Review*, Dallas’s *The Jewish Monitor*, Milwaukee’s *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, Augusta, Georgia’s *The Southern Israelite*, and Indianapolis’s *The Jewish Post*. These newspapers were chosen simply because they were available through digital archives and they contained articles discussing lynching and race riots. This is most likely only a sampling of the many articles and essays Jewish people have published on this topic. Material was found through the use of the search engines of various databases and online archives, and the articles were found using search terms such as “lynching” and “race riot.” Searches also included specific events and people, such as “Atlanta riot” and “Preston Porter,” especially in newspapers in or near the communities where the events took place. Since this process produced a sample of sources, there was not enough information to separate by geographic region (e.g., Midwest or South). These sources are limited to English-language sources. For an analysis of Yiddish-language publications on this topic, see Diner’s *In the Almost Promised Land*. Ribak also discusses the attitudes of Eastern European immigrants to the Black community in his

¹⁷ Gil Ribak, “Negroes Must Not Be Likened to Jews’: The Attitudes of Eastern European Jewish Immigrants toward African Americans in a Transnational Perspective,” *Modern Judaism - A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience* 37, no. 3 (October 1, 2017): 271–296, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mj/kjx028>.

article, “‘Negroes Must Not Be Likened to Jews’: The Attitudes of Eastern European Jewish Immigrants toward African Americans in a Transnational Perspective.”

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter discusses material prior to 1915, the second chapter discusses the Frank lynching of 1915, and the third chapter discusses material post-1915. The Frank lynching serves as a midpoint in the conversation as well as a significant turning point in the Jewish response. The first chapter, on the years prior to 1915, examines the early use of the language of barbarism and compares the Kishinev pogrom to the Atlanta race riot and the Springfield race riot. The second chapter focuses on the various forces and social conditions that pitted Black people against Jewish people during the Frank trial and the change in the conversation that took place after Frank’s lynching. The third chapter discusses the Northern race riots, especially the Chicago race riot, and the anti-lynching rhetoric that arose toward the end of the lynching era.

In his 1975 article on Black-Jewish relations, Foner lamented the lack of scholarship on the subject prior to the 1950s. Since then, there has been much more research filling that gap in historical knowledge. However, the issue of lynching was a pre-1950 issue that led up to the civil rights movement. The rhetoric around lynching and race riots created patterns of speech that reverberated throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This study into how Jews responded to lynching and race riots in that earlier period hopefully widens the historical lens that surveys how the language and attitudes of American Jews were shaped and formed during the early stages of this relationship. This thesis contributes to our understanding of how Jews imagined their connection to the Black community—America’s defining minority community—and how Jews understood their own position in the racial hierarchy of this land.

CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY YEARS

Introduction

Although the lynching era began post-Reconstruction, the Jewish response in the public sphere was slow in those early years and only picked up in the early 1900s. The themes that came out of those early years reflect the level of comfort the assimilated German Jewish population had attained . These Americanized Jews have an Americanized response to lynching and refer to them with the language of barbarism and savagery, commonly used in the secular press, in contrast with their image of a civilized, lawful American democracy. These early Jews strove to fit neatly into the Black-white divide of American society, and so they repeated anti-Black tropes and did not question the image of the Black rapist mainstream press portrayed . Importantly, their stance against lynching did not go so far as to undermine the racial caste system of America.

The conversation began to change as reports of pogroms in Eastern Europe intensified. The mainstream press began drawing parallels between America's lynching obsession and the mob violence directed at Jews in Europe. Jews were quick to downplay that parallel with the purpose of distancing the Jews from America's Black population in the minds of white America. After all the hard work that those early German Jewish immigrants did to Americanize, they did not think that being grouped with America's most oppressed minority was a healthy strategy for Jewish survival. This is most obvious in the discussion around the Atlanta race riot, when non-Jewish papers invoked the parallel with the Kishinev pogrom just a few years earlier.

The response shifted directions yet again in response to a major Northern race riot in Springfield, Illinois. In this riot, a few years removed from Atlanta and Kishinev, the Jews were no longer so defensive about the parallel between pogroms and lynching, and some Jewish

papers even invoked the parallel on their own. This was also the first time that papers more significantly spoke against anti-Black racism. This was possible because unlike the Atlanta riot, the Springfield riot did not put Jews in the middle of the tension between the white and Black populations. The one complicating issue for Jews in the Springfield riot was the involvement of a Jewish man in the actual lynching at the center of the riot; the Jewish response to claims of a Jewish lyncher brought out Jewish attempts to defend their community and reframe the situation to put the community in a better light.

These early conversations about lynching created the language the Jewish community used for years to come. These early moments—Kishinev, Atlanta, and Springfield—became part of the Jewish memory, and the strategies created in those situations were adapted and reused in each new significant moment afterwards.

Modern Barbarism: Pre-1903 Responses

In a survey of Jewish newspapers, few sources discussed lynching before 1903, compared with later discussions about the subject. A careful search through digitized archives of Jewish papers on the Internet harvested relatively few mentions of lynching or responses to specific instances of lynching and riots. The early silence is in itself a commentary on the relationship between Jews and lynching. This can of course be attributed to the fact that there was not a large population of Jews yet in the United States, particularly in the South, which had the highest rate of lynching. However, this can also be due, in part, to lack of Jewish interest: Lynching and race riots did not become a big issue for Jews until the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. That being said, mentions of lynching did occur in Jewish sources, as it was a ubiquitous part of American culture starting with the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the rise of the Jim Crow era. These early sources used language that would be forever recycled in Jewish discussions about lynching.

From 1877 to 1903, Jewish sources expressed similar attitudes toward lynching and race riots. The most common view was that lynching was reprehensible because of the barbaric nature of the practice. Over and over, Jewish sources used the words “barbarism,” “savages,” and “outrage” to describe various lynchings. The part that Jews found most reprehensible was that the law of the land and the authority of the government was undermined when common people took the law into their own hands through violent means. The sources also expressed the opinion that lynching was caused by deficiencies in the U.S. criminal courts and by dissatisfaction with the way capital cases were handled. An article from the *American Israelite* in 1879, titled “Barbarous Laws,” discussed both the perceived faults with capital laws and the issue of mob law. The article said:

Who gave you a right to execute a man for rape without adultery, burglary without murder, cattle or horse stealing? Who gave you barbarians a right to *Lynch* a man—to let those go unpunished who commit the outrage, or to hoodwink and smile in your public organs? This is a Christian country, it appears, because you make Sunday laws; the criminal code is as heathenish as it could possibly be, and as barbarous as in the Christian countries of the Middle Ages.¹⁸

In 1891 there was a famous lynching of eleven Italians in New Orleans.¹⁹ In response, the *Reform Advocate* said that “lynch law, no matter what the provocation, is unmitigated lapse into barbarism.” The article also implies that the victims were at fault, even though the way justice was carried out was incorrect. It said:

In the face of these facts, it matters not that public justice often miscarries. The maddened crowd who break the law and steep their hands in blood, give a blow to the respect which

¹⁸ “Barbarous Laws,” *The American Israelite*, May 23, 1879.

¹⁹ “On March 14, 1891, a mob of thousands stormed a prison in New Orleans, demanding blood. The city’s police chief had been shot to death, and hundreds of Italian-Americans had subsequently been arrested in connection with the murder. Of them, 19 had been indicted. But for the mob of vigilantes, fired up by anti-immigrant sentiment, due process didn’t matter. After six acquittals and three additional mistrials, they stormed the city jail and proceeded to brutally murder 11 men.” Brigit Katz, “New Orleans Apologizes for 1891 Lynching of Italian-Americans,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed November 4, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/new-orleans-apologizes-1891-lynching-italian-americans-180971959/>.

the law should command, more fatal in its consequences and acquittal of the criminal though morally thought guilty.²⁰

In 1893, in response to the lynching of Samuel J. Bush, an op-ed in the *American Israelite* took issue with the administration of justice. It said:

With whom does the disgrace of the recent lynching in the State of Illinois lie? With the mob? Well, I wot [sic] not! If the people could depend upon the proper administration of justice, there would be no lynch law. Primarily of course, the fault lies with the people, for they have within themselves the power to reform the laws of criminal procedure. But they feel themselves no match for legal chicane and in despair take a short cut to accomplish the ends of justice. Mob law is a disgrace, but there are more shameful things perpetrated under the guise of law than that. It is almost impossible to convict a criminal who has money or influence, and it is that knowledge which makes people desperate.²¹

In a sermon, Rabbi Victor Caro (1856–1912)²² blamed “the vicious jury system and the corrupt practices of criminal lawyers” for a lynching in Indiana in 1897.²³ The *American Israelite* reported on a sermon given by Rabbi Joseph Silverman (1860–1930) at Temple Emanu-El in New York in response to the lynching of Sam Hose (1875–1899)²⁴ in 1899. Silverman discussed the barbarity of lynching, pointing out the U.S. government’s condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Spanish government in the Spanish-American War, rather than trying to address the “nameless torture and terrible persecution” perpetrated by Americans. The writer of the article disagreed with Silverman, saying, “the terrible lynch justice case in Georgia cannot be justly called modern barbarism, for it is the height of intensified and inveterate criminalism.”

²⁰ “Editorial Notes,” *The Reform Advocate*, March 20, 1891, Vol. 1. No. 5. edition, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/refadv/1891/03/20/01/article/1>.

²¹ Nickerdown, “Notes and Comments,” *The American Israelite*, June 15, 1893.

²² Rabbi Victor Caro was born in Budapest and served Congregation B’ne Jeshurun in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. “Biographical Sketches of Rabbis and Cantors Officiating in the United States,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 5 (1903): 40–108.

²³ “Milwaukee,” *The American Israelite*, September 23, 1897.

²⁴ Sam Hose was a Black man accused of killing his former boss and raping his boss’s wife (a claim that was later revealed to be false). He was brutally tortured, mutilated, and murdered in a gruesome spectacle lynching. “Brutal Lynching of Sam Hose,” accessed November 25, 2021, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/socialvulnerability/>.

However, at the end of the article, the writer noted, “still we feel proud that Dr. Silverman had the moral courage to chastise the outrage from that influential pulpit.”²⁵

When Jews commented on specific lynchings, it is clear to see that there’s a pattern of how they mourned the loss of the reputation of the local state or government, rather than the injustice toward the victim who they, and most of white society, saw as a criminal. However, in most of these cases the victim, typically a Black man, was actually innocent of any crime. In 1900 Isidore Wise (d. 1929) wrote an article about the lynching of Preston Porter (1885–1900) in Colorado. He referred to the incident as “the burning of this monster,” which would “serve as a wholesome example.” He wrote:

Be that as it may, the people of Denver felt called upon to utter a formal protest against such barbaric practices as the roasting of the human being. The honor of the state was at stake and it was considered judicious to let the world know that the better class of people are opposed to such brutal methods of punishment. The lynching of Porter is still the talk of the town and, so far as I am able to determine, is universally condemned. Not the killing of the brute, but of the manner of the killing.²⁶

It is unclear if Wise agreed with this or not, but since he referred to Porter as a “monster” and a “brute,” it seems as if he had no problem with this general opinion. Wise also noted the response of Rabbi William S. Friedman (1869–1944),²⁷ the local rabbi. As part of a gathering about this event, Wise said, “Rabbi Friedman handled the matter as a point of law, and demonstrated that there is no palliation for the violation of the law of the land, however great the provocation may be.” This shows that Friedman believed in the guilt of the victim, and he saw

²⁵ “Editorial Article 10,” *The American Israelite*, May 4, 1899, 10.

²⁶ Isidor Wise, “Colorado Notes,” *The American Israelite*, December 6, 1900.

²⁷ Rabbi Friedman served Congregation Emanuel in Denver for forty years. He also founded the National Jewish Hospital for Consumptives. “Collection: Rabbi William S. Friedman Papers,” Denver Public Library, accessed November 26, 2021, <https://archives.denverlibrary.org/repositories/3/resources/364>; “Forty-Year Ministry of Rabbi William Friedman Celebrated in Denver,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), February 17, 1930, <https://www.jta.org/1930/02/17/archive/forty-year-ministry-of-rabbi-william-friedman-celebrated-in-denver>.

real injustice as violation of the law of the land and the state. Similarly, an article in 1891 discussed the lynching of Joe Coe²⁸ in Omaha, Nebraska. The article said, “Our fair city has gained an unenviable notoriety,” showing that the issue at stake was not the death of Coe but the reputation of the state and the government. The article described the event as an attempt to mob the jail and resulted in “the stringing up of a negro who had been incarcerated for a most brutal attack upon a young child.” The article stated that “we must out of necessity deprecate such spasmodic attempts at a return to the primeval manners of this wild and wooly West, we cannot but think that the occasional cropping out of the virtuous indignation of the people at large serves a good purpose.”²⁹ An article on the lynching of Jesse Mitchell (1868–1893)³⁰ in 1893 from the *Jewish South* noted that “there have been too many cases of lynching in the South for its good name,” again referring to the reputation of the region and the government. The writer agreed with the culpability of Mitchell, saying there was “no provocation sufficiently great or any crime so heinous as to justify citizens to overturn and defy the law by which they're governed.”. Finally, the article ended by decrying the barbarity, but also mentioning the waste of human lives, saying, “Every instance of lynch law is a step backward. It undermines the stability of government; it weakens the foundation of law; it defiles the dignity of man, and profanes the

²⁸ Joe Coe, also known as George Smith, was a railroad porter in Omaha, Nebraska. He was falsely accused of raping and murdering a five-year-old white girl, Lizzie Yates. A mob stole him from prison and lynched him. Ericka Benedicto, “The Lynching of Joe Coe, 1891,” May 27, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/the-lynching-of-joe-coe-1891/>.

²⁹ G.B., “Omaha, Neb.,” *The American Israelite*, October 22, 1891.

³⁰ Mitchell was a Black man in Virginia who was accused of raping a white girl, the stepdaughter of his employer. Twice, he was convicted and the conviction was overturned, and so a mob stole him from prison and lynched him. “Jesse Mitchell in Amelia,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://sites.lib.jmu.edu/valynchings/va1893091501/>.

sanctity of human life.”³¹ An article on the lynching of Joseph Cocking³² in 1896 said it is a “severe attack on the people of Maryland,” rather than on the lynching victim, “that a mob took a supposed murderer from jail and lynched him for the alleged reason that his trial would have been at once too expensive and too uncertain of its result.” The article went on to criticize the criminal law code as the reason for the lynching.³³

There’s also a sense of frustration between the Northern and Southern portrayals of lynching. An article on the lynching of Dan Arata,³⁴ a man of Italian descent, in Denver said, “Why the Eastern papers laid so much stress upon lynching we cannot imagine ... This was the first case of lynch law that has been enacted in Denver. How many Eastern cities can boast of such a record?”³⁵ More common is the North-South divide. In 1897, there was a lynching in Urbana, Ohio.³⁶ An article in the *Jewish South* said:

We hope that the event will teach the good citizens of Ohio, and incidentally of the North, that the mass of the people are not responsible for the act of a few lawless ones. For years past, we regret to say, that, owing to the surroundings, lynching has been much more frequent in the South and other sections. In each case the press North has, without exception, seen in the occurrence a proof of the uncivilized condition of this section. We hope now that they know ‘how it feels.’³⁷

³¹ C., “Lynch Law,” *The Jewish South*, September 22, 1893, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94051168/1893-09-22/ed-1/seq-4/>.

³² Joseph Cocking was a white English immigrant. When his wife and sister-in-law were found murdered, he was accused. A crowd found the justice system’s handling of his case too slow, and they took him out of the Port Tobacco jail and lynched him. Jonathan Pitts, “Lynchings in Maryland,” *Baltimore Sun*, accessed November 26, 2021, <https://news.baltimoresun.com/maryland-lynchings/>.

³³ “Lynch Law and Its Remedy,” *The Jewish Exponent*, July 3, 1896.

³⁴ Arata was a white Italian man who was accused of drunkenly murdering a man named Benjamin Lightfoot. A mob broke into the prison he was in, took him away, and lynched him. “Lynching at Denver,” *The Castle Rock Journal*, August 2, 1893, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=CRJ18930802.2.35&e=-----en-20-1--img-txIN%7ctxCO%7ctxTA-----0----->.

³⁵ “The Condition of Things in Denver,” *The American Israelite*, August 17, 1893.

³⁶ Charles Mitchell, a Black man, was accused of raping a white woman. He was secretly smuggled into prison and protected by the Ohio National Guard, yet a mob was still able to steal him away and lynch him. “Two Citizens Killed,” *The New York Times*, June 5, 1897, <https://www.nytimes.com/1897/06/05/archives/two-citizens-killed-nine-others-wounded-in-urbana-ohio-by-the.html>.

³⁷ *The Jewish South*, June 11, 1897, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94051168/1897-06-11/ed-1/seq-6/>.

The injustice here was not about the lynching itself but about the Northern attack on the South. Similarly, in 1899, an article in the *Jewish Messenger* said:

I wish the Northern papers would cease to publish anonymous and irresponsible letters on the lynching question. Our southern brethren know their business as well as their critics, and they are neither brutes nor anarchists. The fact is, we in the North do not understand Southern conditions. That Northerners who live an extended time in the South form a different opinion on certain topics tells its own story. The effect of this lynching correspondence is mischievous and the extreme.³⁸

In all of these sources there is little to no mention of the injustice toward Black people, but rather an assumption that the Black person is a criminal figure and deserved his punishment, if not in the manner it was done. The violence, according to these sources, is toward the state and the authority of government, as well as the reputation of the South in particular. Jews were concerned with the law over all else in this period. This concern would stand until two events significantly changed how Jews responded to racial violence: the Kishinev massacre of 1903 and the Atlanta race riot of 1906.

Kishinev (1903) and Atlanta (1906)

In the early 1900s, the confluence of the Kishinev pogrom and the Atlanta race riot—two instances of bigoted violence—changed how Jews related to lynching and riots in America. The nature of these two instances of violence against minorities invoked comparisons between the Jewish and Black experiences, both in and out of the Jewish world. The Jewish response to this analogy reveals internal tension over the place of Jews in America and how Jews related to the American racial hierarchy.

³⁸ "Our Gossip," *The Jewish Messenger (1857-1902)*, August 25, 1899.

The lynching era in America overlapped with the rising tide of pogroms in Europe, and there had always been awareness of this violent parallel, including before Kishinev and Atlanta. There were some comparisons made between lynching and pogroms in the years prior, although these early Jewish voices did not have the same opinion of the accuracy of this parallel. In 1898 there was a race riot in Wilmington, North Carolina. A white mob burned down a Black-owned newspaper and attacked the Black population of the city in response to the rising political power of the Black community. It was reported that twenty-five Black people had been killed in the riots, but it was suspected that hundreds more were murdered.³⁹ In response to this riot, the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* published an editorial condemning the violence and comparing the suffering of Black people in America to the Jewish experience of oppression. The newspaper called on Jews to condemn the riot and support a similarly oppressed minority group. In this context, the analogy between the two groups was used to garner Jewish sympathy for the cause of Black oppression. In response, two different Southern Jewish newspapers published editorials disagreeing with the Northern paper's comparison. Frank Cohen, editor of the Atlanta *Jewish Sentiment*, said that the *Exponent*'s comparison was "an example of the 'deformed opinion' of Northern Jews on the 'Negro question' in the South." Herbert T. Ezekiel, editor of Richmond's *Jewish South*, echoed the criticism and went further than Cohen by attempting to refute the claims of the *Jewish Exponent*. He said:

Our people, though persecuted and driven from pillar to post, do not possess the criminal instincts of the colored race.... The comparison of Jews and negroes is, we had always thought, a pastime of our Christian neighbors, and one which we, of all people, should not countenance.... There is nothing in common between the two races in this section, and if a comparison holds elsewhere, either the Jews or the negroes must be very different from that they are here.⁴⁰

³⁹ "The Wilmington Massacre Is a Lesson in American History," *Time*, accessed November 26, 2021, <https://time.com/5861644/1898-wilmington-massacre-essential-lesson-state-violence/>.

⁴⁰ Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 55.

The two arguments showed how Southern Jews tried to distance themselves from the Black community in order to claim a white identity. It also showed an awareness of the different racial context that Northern Jews faced. Comparisons of Black and Jewish people, along with disagreements over the comparison, had thus existed prior to 1903. However, Kishinev became a turning point, when rhetoric comparing the bigotry and cruelty experienced by Jews and Blacks intensified. This provoked disagreement within the Jewish community, and many Jews became much less likely to endorse the comparison. It also became less an issue of Northern versus Southern Jews and turned into the task of defending Jewish interests at home and abroad, especially in response to Russian threats.

Kishinev was a town in Europe that had come under Russian rule in 1818. The city was a commercial and industrial center and had attracted Jews from other parts of the Russian Empire. Jews owned most of the factories, large commercial houses, and printing presses in the city. In 1894, a Moldavian nationalist named Pavolachi Krushevan (1860–1909) took control of the only daily newspaper in the region. He spread anti-Jewish propaganda, including blood libels, and eventually his writing incited a pogrom on April 19, 1903. Young men in the city harassed Jews and smashed the windows of Jewish houses and stores. They were joined by students and looters, and local police even encouraged the violence. The descriptions of these organized riots are deeply disturbing: “Nails were driven through heads; bodies, hacked in half; bellies, split open and filled with feathers. Women and girls were raped, and some had their breasts cut off.”⁴¹ One hundred forty-one people died during the pogrom, and eight more died of wounds sustained during the violence. Four hundred ninety-five Jews were wounded, two thousand were left

⁴¹ Monty Noam Penkower, “The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903: A Turning Point in Jewish History,” *Modern Judaism* 24, no. 3 (2004): 187–225.

homeless, and the community lost 2.5 million rubles in personal property damage.⁴² News of the violence was widely condemned in United States, both from Jewish and non-Jewish sources. In the aftermath of the massacre, the highest U.S. government actors engaged in the comparison between pogroms and lynching, which raised the political stakes for the Jews. In response to the American protest against Kishinev, the Russian government decried American hypocrisy. In the Jewish papers, it was reported that “the Russian government, in rejecting the protest from the United States, cited the lynchings of blacks and anti-Negro riots in this country, and advised President [Theodore] Roosevelt to concern himself with persecution of minorities in his own country before he criticized Russia.”⁴³ The *Jewish Voice* in St. Louis published a response from Roosevelt (1858–1919) addressing the Russian criticism and defending the right of America to protest Kishinev. Roosevelt said:

I am confident that much good has already been done by the manifestations throughout this country, without any regard to creed whatsoever, of horror and sympathy over what has occurred. It is gratifying to know what we would, of course, assume, that the government of Russia shows the feelings of horror and indignation with which the American people look upon the outrages at Kischineff and is moving vigorously, not only to prevent their continuance, but to punish the perpetrators. That government takes the same view of those outrages that our own government takes of the riots and lynchings which sometimes occur in our country, but do not characterize either our government or our people.⁴⁴

This was not the end to government discussion on this issue. In 1906, a subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs gave a hearing to Representatives Henry Mayer Goldfogle

⁴² Penkower, 188.

⁴³ Philip S. Foner, “Black-Jewish Relations in the Opening Years of the Twentieth Century,” *Phylon* (1960-) 36, no. 4 (1975): 363, <https://doi.org/10.2307/274634>.

⁴⁴ “The President of the United States and the Secretary of State Express Themselves to the President of the I.O.B.B. on The Russian Outrages,” *The Jewish Voice*, June 19, 1903.

(1856–1929)⁴⁵ and William Sulzer (1863–1941),⁴⁶ both of New York. During the hearing, the committee described to the congressmen the struggles of the Jews in Russia and recommended resolutions condemning the violence. A Jewish paper reported that the committee received a letter from Secretary of State Elihu Root (1845–1937)⁴⁷ advising against the resolution for fear of offending the Russian government. The article reported:

It has been suggested unofficially to members of the committee that Russia has as much right to remonstrate with the United States against the lynching of negroes in the South as we have to address to the government at St. Petersburg a criticism of the treatment suffered by the Jews. In view of the attitude of the administration the committee will not report the resolutions which it has had under consideration.⁴⁸

These high-level interchanges showed Jews the consequences of this comparison. Russians used the question of lynching to argue against U.S. protests and criticisms of the anti-Jewish riots in Kishinev, which affected government policy. These developments caused some Jews to be wary of the comparison.

Nongovernmental responses from Black and white people also circulated in the Jewish world, adding political resonances to the comparison of lynching and pogroms. In one example, a Jewish paper reported on the remarks given by U.S. Commissioner of Immigration, Colonel John B. Weber (1842–1926),⁴⁹ at a Chautauqua conference. He disagreed that the U.S. could not protest against Kishinev because of lynchings, and his argument was based on the contrast between the two events. Blithely overlooking Jim Crow legislation, Weber declared: “I can see

⁴⁵ “Henry Mayer Goldfogle,” accessed October 21, 2021, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/henry-mayer-goldfogle>.

⁴⁶ “Sulzer, William,” US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives, accessed October 21, 2021, [https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/S/SULZER,-William-\(S001065\)/](https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/S/SULZER,-William-(S001065)/).

⁴⁷ “Elihu Root,” accessed October 21, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/root-elihu>.

⁴⁸ “Is America Afraid of Russia?,” *The Jewish Voice*, February 16, 1906.

⁴⁹ Weber was a U.S. representative and the first Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island. “Col. John B. Weber,” accessed October 21, 2021, <https://www.buffaloah.com/a/forestL/weber/index.html>.

material differences between conditions there and here. There are no laws in this country infringing upon the rights of the negro in respect of his person, his property or his conscience.”⁵⁰ This was, in essence, the argument that the American government was not explicitly oppressing Black people, whereas the Russian government was the source of Jewish oppression. This argument addressed the question of government approval or disapproval, and those using it were saying that the U.S. government was not guilty of what was happening in the South and therefore could comment upon the failures of the Russian government.

The Black community had previously expressed sympathy for the Jewish victims of Russian pogroms but was angered by the lack of reciprocity. After a U.S. Senate resolution expressed horror at the violence in the aftermath of the deadly Bialystok pogrom of 1906, some Black newspapers pointed out the hypocrisy.⁵¹ The editors of the *Voice of the Negro* said, “With the Jews all lovers of justice are bound to sympathize.... But what right has the United States Senate to be horrified?...We are having here in America Kishinevs and Bialystoks everyday.”⁵² Even figures on the extreme political right weighed in on this comparison. Thomas Dixon Jr. (1864– 1946), author of the highly romanticized pro-Ku Klux Klan novel *The Clansman* and an influential white supremacist, argued against the comparison between Black and Jewish people. He said that Jews were white and had achieved “noble civilization,” in contrast with Black people in America.⁵³ Three years later, Dixon railed against Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) for his comparison of Jews and Black people in his book *The Future of the American Negro*.

⁵⁰ “Jewish Chautauqua Society: Seventh Summer Assembly,” *The Jewish Voice*, July 17, 1903.

⁵¹ The Bialystok Pogrom occurred between June 14–16, 1906. For more on this pogrom and other anti-Jewish pogroms during this era, see I. Michael Aronson, *Troubled Waters: Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990).

⁵² Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), 195.

⁵³ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 46.

Some Jews actually applauded Dixon's comments. The New Orleans *Jewish Ledger* reprinted Dixon's comments and embellished them with their own lines, which they attributed to him, saying: "To compare the Jew, who occupies the highest pinnacle of human superiority and intellectual attainment, with the Negro who forms the mud at its base, is something only a Negro with more than the usual vanity and impudence of his race could attempt."⁵⁴

The Jewish press reprinted all of these responses, which showed that Jews were aware of the political ramifications of analogizing Kishinev with lynching and race riots. Agreeing with the parallel meant supporting the Black community and standing up against lynching and other racial violence in America, which Jews agreed was abhorrent. But this was an unpopular position to take in the Jewish community because of the Russian response to the American petition against the inhumanity of the pogroms. Because of this, to justify the U.S. protest of Kishinev, Jews disagreed with the parallel between pogroms and lynching. However, this meant disassociating Jews and Black people. The arguments generally used to do this involved praising the innate worthiness of the Jewish community and labeling the Black community as criminalistic and of poor character. Thus, the statement from the Russian government put the defense of Jews in opposition with the defense of Black lynching victims, and Jews had to choose their rhetoric carefully.

A few Jewish publications, such as the New Orleans *Jewish Ledger*, were fine with reprinting articles espousing white supremacist views. However, most of the Jewish publications answered this dilemma with a moderate stance. For example, the *Jewish Exponent* reported on a sermon by Rabbi Henry Berkowitz (1857–1924),⁵⁵ called "The Battle for the Right," in which he

⁵⁴ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 56.

⁵⁵ Berkowitz was a Reform rabbi who served Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Philadelphia for most of his career. "Henry Berkowitz Papers," accessed May 18, 2021, <http://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/ms/ms0025/ms0025.html>.

“spoke of the year past as one full of the grossest wrongs.” This article was ambiguous in its parallel of pogroms and lynching and generally aimed to further sympathy toward Jews without repeating racist tropes. The paper reported:

He referred to the lynchings, burnings at the stake and other nauseating crimes committed in the spirit of revenge. We have witnessed a carnival of lawlessness and brutality which carried us back to the chaos that was before civilization. We have lived through one of the worst years of our history, said the rabbi. Kishineff and Gomel⁵⁶ has presented to the world the ghastly spectacle of priests, guardians of the right, urging the people to wrongdoing, and soldiers, guardians of peace, become fiendish ghouls, goading on the mob to pillage and massacre.⁵⁷

It was unclear whether or not lynching in this article refers to the American South or pogroms, but the term implies a parallel of the two events. It was used here to gain sympathy for the Jews of Kishinev. The sermon—or at least the article reporting on it—did not directly comment on lynching but only used it to further the Jewish cause.

Much of the ink spent discussing the parallel in this period was used to refute or comment on the analogies made by non-Jewish papers. Eric Goldstein points to an incident in which a Philadelphia journal called *The Public* accused the American government of hypocrisy when it condemned the Russian attacks against Jews but was silent about lynching of Black people in America. Goldstein says, “The comparison raised an uncomfortable parallel for northern Jews, who were worried about the prospect of immigrants being classed with African Americans.”⁵⁸ Solomon Solis-Cohen (1857–1948), a Philadelphia physician and B’nai B’rith leader, responded to *The Public* article in his own editorial. He attempted to refute the analogy between Black

⁵⁶ Gomel was a town that became a district capital in Belarus. In 1903, a pogrom in Gomel resulted in the deaths of eight Jews. “Gomel, Belarus,” accessed November 26, 2021, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/gomel>.

⁵⁷ “The Battle for the Right: From Dr. Berkowitz’s Sermon at Rodef Shalom,” *The Jewish Exponent*, October 2, 1903.

⁵⁸ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 65.

lynching victims and pogroms against Jews in Russia. He argued that the Black lynching victims were somehow at fault because of their own criminal activity, whereas Jews were innocent. He brought up the common argument that lynching had no government approval, whereas the pogroms were government approved, thus proving that lynching did not reflect the barbarism of the U.S. government or invalidate a U.S. governmental response to pogroms. Solis-Cohen felt that the parallel threatened support for Jews, and his way of defending Jews and garnering support for them in Russia was to disassociate them from violence against Black people in the United States. A similar newspaper disagreement occurred in 1906, after Booker T. Washington compared lynching and pogroms in a speech in St Louis. *The Modern View*, a local Jewish newspaper, once again argued against the comparison. It invoked the argument that Black people were innately criminal and brought disrepute upon their own community, whereas Jews were feared because they were too successful. It also argued that African Americans enjoyed the benefit of a free government and educational opportunities, which made their supposed criminal activity somehow all the more their fault. This was in contrast to Russian Jews, who lived under an oppressive government. According to the paper, they remained free from crime and therefore were innocent victims of violence perpetrated against them. All these refutations served to create distance between the Black and Jewish experiences, and they used the racial stereotypes of Black people to prove the whiteness of Jews.

The arguments and disagreements over the parallel between Jewish and Black oppression only became magnified after the Atlanta race riot, which occurred September 22–24, 1906. Multiple contextual circumstances led to the riot, the first of which was a rapid rise in the population—especially the Black population—of Atlanta in the early twentieth century. This put pressure on municipal services and heightened class distinctions. There was concern over

unemployed Black men who frequented saloons; they were blamed for the rising crime rates, and fears arose regarding sexual violence toward white women. At the time of the riot, the gubernatorial race between M. Hoke Smith (1855–1931) and Clark Howell (1863–1936)⁵⁹ was heating up, and through their ties to the two largest newspapers in Atlanta, they published articles encouraging white fears of the Black upper class to further their own political goals. Then violence finally broke out on the morning of September 21, when the Atlanta newspapers published articles about four sexual assaults on white women by Black men, none of which were ever substantiated. In response, thousands of white men and boys gathered in a mob throughout Atlanta’s central business district, assaulting hundreds of Black people and Black-owned businesses. A crowd burned down a Black-owned barber shop, attacked street cars, and invaded Black neighborhoods. At the end of the violence, between twenty-five and forty African Americans were killed.⁶⁰

The local Jewish response to the Atlanta race riot was complicated, especially since the Jewish community was partially blamed as one of the causes of the riot. The saloons that were blamed for the criminal Black population were owned by immigrants, including Jews. One newspaper noted that “as to white foreigners [Russian Jews and Greeks] who cater to the negro trade and negro vice in this locality ... it is left to the judgment of the reader which is of the

⁵⁹ Smith was a governor of Georgia and also represented Georgia in the United States Senate. He was the owner of the *Atlanta Journal*, which he used to further his political career. As governor, Smith was a champion of progressive legislation, but also disenfranchised Black voters. Howell was the editor and owner of the *Atlanta Constitution*. He served for three terms in the Georgia House of Representatives, but when he lost the governor election to Smith, he never again held a significant elected office. His newspaper won a Pulitzer Prize in 1931 for an investigation into Atlanta corruption. “Hoke Smith,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (blog), accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/hoke-smith-1855-1931/>; “Clark Howell - New Georgia Encyclopedia,” accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/clark-howell-1863-1936/>.

⁶⁰ “Atlanta Race Riot of 1906,” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, accessed October 15, 2021, <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/atlanta-race-riot-of-1906/>.

higher grade in the social scale, the proprietors or their customers.”⁶¹ Once again, Jews had to choose between standing up for another oppressed minority or protecting their own interests. Stephen Hertzberg discussed the careful and quiet response that emanated from the Atlanta Jewish community, arguing that there was no evidence that the Atlanta Jews would ever have put their own well-being at risk for the sake of Black rights. He said:

Only in the case of the prohibition, free silver, and Leo Frank controversies did Jews take the unpopular side of an emotionally charged question. In each instance, their interests were directly affected, and they found themselves singled out for criticism. Even as honorary white men sharing the color of privilege, Jews were not free to speak their minds. More than anything else, support for white supremacy was the test of a true Southerner. It was perilous enough for a southern-born white Christian to challenge the prevailing system of race relations; for a Jew to have done so would have jeopardized the position of the entire Jewish community, especially at a time when the group’s status was being undermined on other fronts.⁶²

This was the cause for the great silence of the Jewish community in the face of this riot. The most outspoken Jewish voice in Atlanta was Rabbi David Marx (1872–1962). Marx was the representative of the general, moderate Jewish opinion “whose support for white supremacy was tempered by a sense of paternalism and desire for racial harmony.”⁶³ Marx was the rabbi of Atlanta’s Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (The Temple). In 1903, long before the riot, Marx had published a statement condemning mob law and lynching, noting that “the slightest pretext has at times been converted into a cause for unbridling the fierce passions of men and staining their hands in blood.”⁶⁴ This showed an awareness of the innocence of the Black population. He admitted that the stated cause of lynching—sexual assault on white women by Black men—was just a pretext. But even if such a crime did occur, Marx insisted that lynch law would be morally

⁶¹ Hertzberg, *Strangers*, 162.

⁶² Hertzberg, 200.

⁶³ Hertzberg, 193.

⁶⁴ “Must Put Down the Mob Or Be Put Down By It,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 14, 1903.

unjustifiable. Although he didn't mention racism explicitly, he came much closer to it than in his other discussions of the topic, in which he assumed Black guilt. In the wake of the Atlanta riot, Marx was one of eighteen men, and the only Jewish person, appointed to the Civic League, an organization that created a biracial plan of cooperation to prevent similar riots.⁶⁵ Goldstein notes "that the plan for racial harmony proposed by the group argued that the best way to improve relations between Blacks and whites was to keep African Americans away from saloons and off the streets."⁶⁶ He argues that this was in line with other outspoken Jewish support of African American rights, in which they upheld social distinctions between Black and white to "position the Jews on the white side of the racial divide."

The Jewish newspapers that reported on the Atlanta race riot all did so through the lens of Kishinev or similar pogroms. This event completed the analogy begun in 1903, and by this point the overwhelming view of the newspapers was that the parallel between the two events must be refuted. Multiple secular newspapers attempted to refute it as well. In one instance, in the *American Israelite*, Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber (1862–1942), spiritual leader of Congregation Kehilath Anshe Mayriv (KAM) in Chicago, reacted to a cartoon in the *Record Herald* of Atlanta that equated the violence of the Atlanta riot with the Kishinev pogrom. Schanfarber relied on two arguments the press commonly used. The first was that Black people were at fault for provoking the riot because of their criminal activity, as opposed to Jews who were characterized as "blameless." The second was the claim that in Russia, the government authorities were the ones directly perpetuating the violence, whereas in Atlanta, the mob was completely separate from the government. He said:

⁶⁵ Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *As But A Day To A Hundred And Twenty 1867–1987* (Atlanta: Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, 1987), 50.

⁶⁶ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 61–62.

The conditions that prevail in Atlanta are bad enough, and put this country to shame; but they're altogether different from those prevailing in Russia. In the first place, the negro element incite the mob to their cruel actions by their low down deeds. The Jews do not give a provoking cause to the Russians for their persecution of them. In Atlanta the authorities are not in cahoots with the attacking mobs, but do all in their power to check their attacks. In Russia, the authorities are in collusion with the attacking mob and connive at their acts. These are facts both citizens of this land and the citizens of Russia should take into consideration. They have done so already.⁶⁷

It is important to note that these claims about the unlawful behavior of the Black community are historically incorrect; they were created to invent a narrative of Jewish innocence in order to express sympathy for the Jews of Kishinev. Schanfarber attempted to do what most American Jews did, which was to condemn mob violence in America while also making space between the Jewish and Black experiences. This approach sustained the social benefit that derived from reminding the majority culture that, generally speaking, Jews and Black people had little in common when it came to the root causes of bigotry. In short, Black people provoked the bigotry they experienced, while Jews were undeserving.

Two articles in the *American Israelite* show the evolution in thinking after the Atlanta riot. On September 27, 1906, just three days after the riot, an editorial team seemed to agree with the parallel between Atlanta and Kishinev, albeit with the proviso that the Atlanta mob did not molest women and children, implying that Kishinev was worse. It said, "Except that the Atlanta mob did not molest women or children, its acts were suggestive enough of Kishineff to bring sorrow to the heart of all true Americans. They do not want to see Russian methods introduced in our country."⁶⁸ The article even half-admitted that Black people weren't criminals, saying, "Atrocities as were the crimes that were the primary cause of the outbreak, they were not committed by the victims of the riot." Later, however, on October 4, another editorial showed an

⁶⁷ Tobias Schanfarber, "News and Views," *The American Israelite*, October 4, 1906.

⁶⁸ "Editorial Article 3—No Title," *The American Israelite*, September 27, 1906, 3.

outright refutation of the analogy, even though it used similar language to the first article. The second article mentioned Siedlce⁶⁹ instead of Kishinev, but the purpose was the same. This article used the argument about government involvement to contrast Atlanta and pogroms, thereby creating distance between Jews and Black people. It used the same language about brutality toward women and children as in the first article, but whereas the first article used it to simply limit the comparison, the second used it to completely disassociate the events, saying the two events should not be placed in the same category.⁷⁰ The editorial also added that shops and homes were not plundered in Atlanta as they were in Kishinev. These arguments are plainly incorrect when measured against the historical record, but they had two purposes. First, they created distance between the Jewish and Black experience of hate crimes and violence. Second, they contrasted the two groups to provoke more sympathy for the Jews. The problem is that these arguments worked by repeating racist tropes about supposedly innately criminal Black people. The first editorial shows reticence to partake in that white supremacist message, but in the face of international pushback and a threat against the Jewish population both in Europe and at home, the newspaper elected to strengthen these arguments in its second editorial.

Yiddish papers were more willing to agree with the analogy and less concerned with creating distance between Black people and Jewish people. After a racial disturbance in 1900, the *Forverts* reported on the “bloody pogroms against the negroes” carried out by the “white pogromchiki.” Eric Goldstein says, “Unlike the acculturated Central European Jews, who held the government authorities blameless for race riots, the *Forverts* indicted the police force,

⁶⁹ Siedlce is a city in Eastern Poland that had a significant Jewish population from the mid-sixteenth century until World War II. In 1903, the Okhrana (the Russian secret police) instigated a pogrom in which twenty-six Jews were killed. For more information on Polish pogroms, see William W. Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁷⁰ “Editorial Article 2—No Title,” *The American Israelite*, October 4, 1906, 2.

arguing that it failed to protect blacks and even incited the white rioters.” Goldstein writes that three years later, when the police quelled a race riot in Evansville, Indiana, the Yiddish papers did not decry the difference in government actions between riots and pogroms as the English papers did. Instead, that same paper reported on the riot as “negro pogroms.”⁷¹ Goldstein discusses how at the beginning of the twentieth century, the acculturated Central European Jews were very concerned with their racial status. This was in contrast with the more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, who did not feel the same concern over their place in the American racial caste system. The result was that acculturated Jews attempted to prove their whiteness while the Yiddish papers were more likely to speak out against the violence directed at Black people. The reactions to Kishinev and Atlanta were especially important in pushing the acculturated Jews to argue against relating the two events. External threats to the Jewish community and secular analogizing created fear within the Jewish community. The reactions to Kishinev and Atlanta were part of the attempt of the Jews to prove their place among the ranks of white people in America. To do so, they had to distance themselves from African Americans and articulate white supremacist arguments.⁷² When the secular press tried to relate Jews and Black people, the Jews used their commentary on Kishinev and the Atlanta race riot to push back and prove their whiteness.⁷³

⁷¹ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 81.

⁷² Goldstein, 55.

⁷³ In an article about how Eastern European Jewish immigrants viewed African Americans, Gil Ribak discussed how they often superimposed their Old-World views of class onto their new surroundings. Thus, these Jewish immigrants saw Black people as America’s peasant class, with all of the associations that had existed from the peasant class of Europe. While it is true that many Eastern European papers were more outspoken against lynching and anti-Black racism than English Jewish papers of the era, plenty of Eastern European immigrant Jews held racist views and shared them in the press. Ribak, “Negroes Must Not Be Likened to Jews’.”

Springfield Race Riot (1908)

In contrast to the Kishinev pogrom and the Atlanta race riot, which were significant to this discussion in tandem, the Springfield riot evoked its own response from the Jewish community for a few reasons. First, it was a major Northern race riot that made news all over the country. Second, the Jewish community was not perceived to be related to the victims of the violence, which made them more sympathetic toward the Black community. And third, a Jewish man was accused of being at the center of the violence. For these reasons, the Springfield race riot stands out in the history of the Jewish response to lynching and riots. Jewish writers built upon the previous discussions of barbarism, they were defensive in discussing the idea of a Jewish lyncher, and they moved toward some sense of outrage against anti-Black racism.

The race riot in Springfield, Illinois, August 14–15, 1908, was described as the first major race riot in the North in more than fifty years. It was significant in the history of lynching and race riots both for that reason and for the fact that it created the impetus for the founding of the NAACP.⁷⁴ It was particularly significant for Jews because one of the people brought to court on formal charges was a Russian Jewish immigrant, Abraham Raymer (b. 1888).⁷⁵

The riot was incited by reports of two separate assaults of white women by Black men. The police arrested Joe James (circa 1890–1908) and George Richardson (b. circa 1872),⁷⁶ and a

⁷⁴ Karlson Yu, "Springfield Race Riot, 1908," June 29, 2008, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/springfield-race-riot-1908/>.

⁷⁵ Abraham Raymer's name is referred to in multiple ways. His first name is often shortened to "Abe," and there are multiple spellings of his last name, including "Reimer." After the trial, not much is known about his life. It seems that he moved to Boston where a sister lived. Based on the *Boston Herald* obituaries of his sisters, Esther Spiegel and Rose Albert, it seems that he died between 1961 and 1970.

⁷⁶ Joe James, a Black man, was accused of murdering a white man named Clergy Ballard. He escaped the lynch mob but was later executed. George Richardson, also a Black man, was accused of raping a white woman named Mabel Hallam. Later, Hallam admitted that the accusation was false, and Richardson was released. "Springfield Illinois Race Riot of 1908" (Springfield Convention and Visitor Bureau, n.d.), <http://springfieldnaacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Springfield-IL-1908-Race-Riot-Brochure2012.pdf>; "Springfield Race Riot of 1908," in *Wikipedia*, February 8, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Springfield_race_riot_of_1908&oldid=1070645509.

mob gathered at the Sangamon County Courthouse with the intent to lynch the two men. However, James and Richardson had been moved from the courthouse, and so the mob found two other Black men in the area, Scott Burton (b. circa 1850) and William Donegan (1829–1908),⁷⁷ and lynched them instead. The mob then turned to Black homes and stores, destroyed property, and assaulted the Black population. At the end, six Black people had been shot and killed, two had been lynched, and the mob caused hundreds of thousands of dollars of property damage.⁷⁸

Jewish writings about the riot continued with the themes of barbarism and showed a change from Kishinev and Atlanta in terms of denouncing racism. An article in the *Jewish Exponent* said that “the race riot at Springfield, Ill., was a disgraceful and outrageous exhibition of downright barbarism.”⁷⁹ This editorial used the same kind of language that showed up in the early days of lynching, in which Jews identified the major problem of lynching as barbarism and the undermining of law and order rather than racism. Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber’s article on the Springfield riot shows the development in the barbarism theme and a change from his writing immediately after Kishinev and Atlanta. He said that “the riotous mob is being held in check [sic] by the forces of law and order” and that “no man has a right to take the law into his own hands.... The majesty of the law must be respected.” This is again the argument that barbarism and lawlessness were the main issues when it came to lynching and race riots. Schanfarber also repeated the claim that the problem was with the justice system and that lynchings and riots

⁷⁷ Burton was a barber. When the mob approached his shop, Burton aimed to defend himself and his property, and was killed. Donegan (also spelled Donnegan) was a respected member of the community in Springfield. Both of these men may have been targeted by the mob because they were Black men married to a white women. “Scott Burton,” Find A Grave, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29887546/scott-burton>; “William K. Donnegan (1829-1908),” Find A Grave, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29887569/william-k-donnegan>.

⁷⁸ Yu, “Springfield Race Riot, 1908.”

⁷⁹ “Here and There,” *The Jewish Exponent*, August 21, 1908.

would be prevented if there was a more efficient way to punish criminals. He said, “It is the law’s delays that is [sic] frequently responsible for the wild storming of the mob. Speedy punishment of crimes of the kind that was responsible for the Springfield mob is an absolute necessity in our day.” The crimes he referred to were the alleged sexual assaults. This again showed a belief in the stereotype of the Black criminal and an assumption of the guilt of the lynching victims. He also touched on the tension between the North and South when he said, “The lynching mob does not hail from the South but from one of the great central states. We have no right to denounce the South, the North is just as lawless as the South when its wild passions are stirred up.” These were arguments that had been used again and again in Jewish writing about lynching and race riots. However, Schanfarber did something new when he discussed Russia in this article. He said:

Talk about Russian lawlessness and barbarity, the tartar is in all of us. We need but to be scratched and the animal that is in us breaks forth. It is not to be wondered at that Russia tells us to mind our own business, when we intercede in behalf of humanity, when it breaks forth in one of its wild orgies and rampages.⁸⁰

This seems to refer to the Kishinev massacre and Russia’s assertions that American protests against the violence in Kishinev were hypocritical because of the lynchings in the South. Previously, Schanfarber tried to defend America by distancing race riots from pogroms and dismissing the comparison. In this article, however, he completely reversed that view. He equated race riots with “Russian lawlessness,” or pogroms. It seems that in the few years since the Atlanta riots, the political fervor around the parallel had died down, and Jews were more open to comparing the experiences of Black people and Jews. In fact, in most of the articles

⁸⁰ Tobias Schanfarber, “News and Views,” *The American Israelite*, August 27, 1908.

about the Springfield riot, there was very little mention of Russia or discussion of the parallel between pogroms and lynching.⁸¹

A new thread that entered the conversation after Kishinev and Atlanta was the discussion of racism and even a denunciation of it, although the discussion was not uniform. An example of Jewish denunciation of racism is found in an article titled “The Demon of Hatred,” which appeared in the *Jewish Exponent*. It said:

Incidents such as the Springfield riots should be impossible in such a land as this. They do not occur in Germany or England; then why should they occur in the best and freest of all countries? The answer is ready at hand. We have tried to do the impossible in endeavoring to reconcile free institutions with the debasing race hatred that is the foe to all considerations of humanity.⁸²

The article went on to talk about the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the biblical injunction to do justice and love mercy. This was an explicit denunciation of racism, and it clearly stated that the issue of the riot was racism rather than some fault in the justice system or lawlessness, as was typical in earlier writings. Though the Springfield riot was only a few years removed from the Kishinev massacre and the Atlanta race riot, some Jews had begun to sympathize with the Black community and felt more comfortable agreeing with the comparison of Black and Jewish experiences. Some were even willing to denounce race hatred.

The *American Israelite* continued the trend of denouncing racism when it discussed an incident in Evanston, Illinois, in an article called, “Not far from Evanston to Springfield.”⁸³ The article discussed a Christian temperance pageant, in which some white families refused to take part unless the Black children were excluded. The article railed against the racism of the

⁸¹ It is also important to note that the number of pogroms decreased significantly after 1906 until after World War I, when the numbers rose again. This could be a factor in the noticeable lack of discussion of pogroms in connection with the Springfield Riot. “Pogroms,” accessed February 24, 2022, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pogroms-2#3>.

⁸² “The Demon of Hatred,” *The Jewish Exponent*, September 4, 1908.

⁸³ “Not Far from Evanston to Springfield,” *The American Israelite*, September 3, 1908.

incident, saying, “Race prejudice, the incapacity to go beyond the color of the skin in estimating the worth of a human being, is the mother of crime everywhere.” The article did to some extent buy into the myth of Black criminality but countered it with an argument about the rape of Black women by white men, saying:

The assault of one black man upon one white woman at rare intervals, relatively speaking, is a horrible thing to contemplate, but the innumerable and continuous assaults of white men upon black women is a parallel and a more horrible crime to contemplate. The poor inoffensive victims, ‘colored,’ so-called, of this high-stepping mob bear in their very complexions the damning evidence of white men’s bestiality. An African of pure blood is a rare find in the United States to-day. The race has been corrupted by the infusion of brutal white blood.

This article directly connected this racist incident to the Springfield riot, calling it a “revelation of the fountainhead of the Springfield mob.” It also said, “It is not so very far from Evanston to Springfield after all.” These comments showed that the issue with the mob in Springfield was the race hatred, rather than the lawlessness. Unlike Kishinev and Atlanta, Jews were not pitted against the interests of the Black community in Springfield, and therefore they were able to align their interests with the Black community and speak out against anti-Black racism.

The Springfield riot was of particular interest to Jews because of a man named Abraham Raymer, a twenty-year-old Jewish immigrant from Russia who had come to America in 1903. It was reported that Raymer was a participant, and perhaps even a leader, in the mob. The most alarming claim was that Raymer incited the mob to attack Donegan and personally either slit his throat or tied the rope around his neck. Goldstein says of Raymer:

Reimer, a native of Zaslav, Russia, was reported to be a ne’er-do-well who had a tattooed arm and worked as a circus performer before immigrating to the United States five years before the Springfield riot. Relocated from the New York ghetto to Birmingham, Alabama by the Industrial Removal Office, he was said by the *Forverts* to have imbibed

some of the ‘spirit of the South, where the life of a Negro is worthless.’ Reimer moved from town to town, holding a series of menial jobs until he ended up in Springfield.⁸⁴

Raymer was the first member of the mob to be brought to trial. He was acquitted three times: first, of murdering Donegan; second, of attacking Loper’s restaurant;⁸⁵ and third, of rioting. He was convicted on a fourth charge, of stealing a sword belonging to Major Otis B. Duncan⁸⁶ (1873–1937), a Black militia man whose home was looted and burned in the riot. Raymer was sentenced to thirty days in jail and a \$25 fine. The failure to prosecute Raymer on the previous three charges led authorities to drop charges against all others who still faced prosecution in connection to the riots.⁸⁷

Jews everywhere were alarmed by the news of Raymer’s participation in the mob, as well as the charges brought against him. The first reaction of the Jewish press was to assume that the accusation against Raymer was antisemitic libel. The Yiddish press, which from the start had denounced racism, lynching, and race riots, could not believe that a Jewish person would participate in such a violent, racist act. Once the truth of Raymer’s participation was revealed, Goldstein says, “the Jewish immigrant public had to resign themselves to the fact that given the right circumstances, the prospect of a ‘yiddisher lyncher’ was no longer unfathomable.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 84.

⁸⁵ “Prominent white restaurant owner and National Guardsman Harry Loper was known to have black employees and played a part in helping law enforcement move the incarcerated suspects, Richardson and James, from Springfield to the jailhouse in Bloomington to save them from the growing lynch mob that would eventually swell into the riot. The subsequent targeted destruction of Loper’s popular and elegant restaurant at Fifth and Monroe was in revenge for its white owner helping the sheriff move the black prisoners—thereby saving them from the mob.” Scott Faingold, “Remains of the Race Riot,” *Illinois Times*, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://www.illinoistimes.com/springfield/remains-of-the-race-riot/Content?oid=11448606>.

⁸⁶ Roberta Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln’s Shadow: The 1908 Race Riot in Springfield, Illinois*, Southern Illinois University Press (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 138.

⁸⁷ “Abraham Raymer (1908 Race Riot),” *SangamonLink*, October 12, 2013, <https://sangamoncountyhistory.org/wp/?p=1474>.

⁸⁸ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 84.

The English-language press, on the other hand, saw the accusation against Raymer as a threat to the well-being of the Jewish community. The articles have a tone of defensiveness and attempt to reframe the situation by putting Raymer and the Jewish community on the side of justice. Similar to the Yiddish press, the *American Israelite* assumed that the reports against Raymer were false and based on antisemitism. The article said, “A few newspapers throughout the country, in treating the incident editorially, have sought to arouse public sentiment against the foreign element generally, and the Jews in particular, by making it appear that Raymer was the head and front of the whole disgraceful movement.” The article dismissed these papers, saying, “They are not of a class to deserve special notice at the present moment” and that “it is worse than useless to attempt to correct every wild statement made by the irresponsible, and usually unidentified persons who write the alleged editorials for the papers in question.”⁸⁹

Multiple Jewish sources sought to ascertain the truth about Raymer. The *American Israelite* shared a report from the *Jewish Courier* of Chicago, which sent a reporter to interview Raymer in prison. Raymer told the reporter that he was not guilty. The article stated that there was a rumor that the paper was going to defend Raymer, but the editor denied the rumor, saying:

Our correspondent in Springfield was ordered to get an interview with Raymer. . . . He had a talk with the prisoner and sent us what Raymer said, which was in substance, that he was not guilty, but he had no desire to cause blood shed, and was simply caught in the mall. He did not implicate ‘Red’ Davenport⁹⁰ or anyone else and talked to our correspondent simply in his own defense.⁹¹

⁸⁹ “Jottings,” *The American Israelite*, September 3, 1908.

⁹⁰ Among Raymer’s claims, in his confession, he said that he did not cut Donegan’s throat, and instead that a man named Red Davenport had actually done that. However, someone by that name was never discovered in Springfield, and there was no evidence of his existence beyond Raymer’s confession. It was later reported that Raymer likely made this figure up. “Springfield Race Riot of 1908.”

⁹¹ “Jottings,” *The American Israelite*, September 3, 1908.

The *Jewish Independent* of Cleveland reported on a visit between Raymer and Rabbi Ludwig Darmstadter.⁹² The article started off saying that Raymer “should not be judged ahead of the courts,” which was an attempt by the Jewish community to hold onto his innocence and showed their defensive attitude toward the press. The paper printed Darmstadter’s report:

‘I heard of this man while in Chicago and went to Springfield for the purpose of seeing him,’ said Rabbi Darmstadter. ‘When I talked to him, he was not under arrest. I asked him to tell me what if anything he had to do with the riots and he said he was an eyewitness but took no part whatever in them. He claimed that he was simply one of the many bystanders, who were drawn into the whirlpool and were either willing or unwilling to witness the terrible affair. The man acted and looked as though he told the truth and I know nothing more about him or the affair except what he said. Since my return home I saw in the newspapers that he was arrested together with a large number of others against whom indictments had been returned.’⁹³

The reports from the *Jewish Independent* and the *Jewish Courier* showed attempts to find the truth about Raymer, but both articles also indicated a belief in his innocence. They were defensive in asserting their truthfulness and lack of bias, and they attempted to reduce Raymer’s guilt. The Jewish community of Springfield was literally defensive in its response, as it attempted to raise money for Raymer’s defense. The St. Louis *Jewish Voice* reported on it, saying, “Several Jews in Springfield, it is reported, have subscribed a substantial sum for the defense of Raymer. Albert Salzenstein⁹⁴ will probably be retained as attorney to defend Raymer, and one of the leading lawyers of Chicago may also be brought into the case.” Although it

⁹² Rabbi Darmstadter was born in Baden, Germany in 1851 and immigrated to America in 1892. He lived in Chicago before moving to Cleveland to become the rabbi of the Chewra Kedisha Bohemian Congregation in 1895. According to a *New York Times* article, it seems that Darmstadt left the rabbinate at some point and began a career as a con-man, eventually landing himself in prison for a book-selling scheme. “Directory of Local Organizations,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 2 (1900): 185–490; “Police Remember a ‘Dr. Darmstadter,’” *The New York Times*, February 3, 1915.

⁹³ “Jottings,” *The American Israelite*, September 3, 1908.

⁹⁴ Salzenstein was a lawyer in the firm McGuire, Hamilton, and Salzenstein. He was a native of Sangamon County, and his law practice was located in Springfield. *History of Sangamon County, Illinois* (Chicago: Inter-state Publishing Company, 1881).

seemed that Raymer was probably guilty, the Jewish community still tried to reframe his case while appearing unbiased. The article reported:

Springfield Jews desire it understood that this action is taken for no desire to shield Raymer if guilty, but merely that simple justice may be done him. One of the leading Jews of Springfield expressed the matter in a nutshell when he said: 'We have no desire whatever that Raymer be shielded if guilty, but we insist that simple justice should be done in this case, as in all others. It is common report that Raymer has been severely beaten and brutally ill-treated by the police. This, of course, is rank injustice. The police should protect prisoners from violence, rather than inflict violence on them.'⁹⁵

This comment aimed to protect the Jewish community of Springfield for defending Raymer by saying it was merely aiming for justice. It also reframed Raymer's guilt by making him appear a victim.

The most significant outcome of the Springfield riot was the creation of the NAACP, supported by both Black and Jewish communal leaders. However, the Jewish community did not uniformly denounce the racism behind the riot, and thus did not come together to fight against racism as a community. Hasia Diner discusses how the Jews who were moved by the Springfield riot and helped to found the NAACP acted as individuals rather than as leaders of institutions:

Yet in this era the number of Jews who as individuals joined with other minority efforts increased dramatically. The history of American Jewish involvement with the founding, funding, and support of the NAACP bore witness to that. Notably, many of these Jews also played key roles in Jewish communal institutions. Emil Hirsch, Louis Marshall, Felix Frankfurter and Stephen Wise all participated and led Jewish institutions. But when they functioned within the ranks of the NAACP, they did not invoke those organizations. They worked as individual Jewish men who felt it incumbent to help the cause of civil rights. Their organizations or institutions were not part of their endeavors.⁹⁶

The Jewish response to the Springfield race riot showed that when Jewish and Black interests were not opposed to each other, the Jews were willing to admit and even denounce racial injustice. However, this was not yet a universal attitude in the Jewish community; most of

⁹⁵ "Interesting Items," *The Jewish Voice*, August 28, 1908.

⁹⁶ Diner, "Multiple Outsiderness."

the Jewish community still used the language of barbarism and blamed the race riots on the justice system's inefficiency in punishing Black criminals. Even so, there began to be evidence of Jewish willingness to sympathize with the Black community. The response of the community to the charges against Raymer highlighted Jewish fear and defensiveness of the reputation of Jews in America.

CHAPTER 2: THE LYNCHING OF LEO FRANK (1915)

Introduction

On August 20, 1915, the St. Louis *Jewish Voice* reported the following:

Marietta, Ga., Aug. 17, 1915. Leo M. Frank was lynched two miles outside Marietta early today. Marietta was the home town of Mary Phagan, the girl an Atlanta jury found Frank guilty of murdering. A mob dragged him from the hospital on Milledgeville prison farm just before midnight. Of all the armed guards on the farm, not one raised a hand to protect him. The mob rushed their prisoner by automobile to the spot where they had chosen to kill him.... There were several thousand persons in the crowd about the tree when the body was cut down. Despite Judge Morris' pleadings, several men in the throng leaped forward as the body was laid on the ground and stamped on the face with their heels.¹

The sensationalist tone was typical of articles discussing the tragedy of the Leo Frank lynching, which was the most alarming incident of American antisemitism at the time and the most significant lynching of a Jewish person in America.² This incident marked a turning point in the history of the Jewish response to lynching. It brought the issue of lynching home to the Jewish community, as the victim was one of their own. Beyond that, this incident also changed the way Jews spoke about lynching, and it was a pivotal moment in their relationship with the Black community.

Leo Max Frank was born in Texas on April 17, 1884. He grew up in Brooklyn and went to the Pratt Institute and Cornell University, where he became a mechanical engineer. He moved

¹ "Leo M. Frank's Blood Has Been Shed!," *The Jewish Voice*, August 20, 1915.

² The only other well-documented lynching of a Jewish person in America was an incident in Franklin, Tennessee in 1868. A Jewish man named S.A. Bierfield ran a dry-goods store. One night, a mob broke into his store, where he and two Black men, Lawrence Bowman and Henry Morton, were eating watermelon. The mob ended up shooting Bierfield and Bowman. *The American Israelite* reported that the mob was made up of members of the Ku Klux Klan, and that perhaps they targeted Bierman because of his support of Reconstruction and his closeness with the Black community. This incident made the front page of the *New York Times*, but did not have much of an impact on the Jewish community nationally. It also did not fit the model of later lynchings, and thus straddled the line between lynching and hate crime. Morris U. Schappes, ed., "148. Double-Lynching of a Jew and a Negro," in *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States 1654-1875* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1950).

to Atlanta to enter business with his uncle, Moses Frank, and together they established the National Pencil Factory. It was in this factory that Frank's troubles began.

Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old worker, was found dead in the basement of the factory on April 27, 1913. Frank was soon arrested for the crime, and on August 25 he was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to death the next day. Over the next two years, legal appeals kept pushing back the date of his execution until April 15, 1915, when the U.S. Supreme Court denied a writ of error requested by Frank's legal counsel. On June 21, the day before the scheduled execution, Governor John Slaton commuted Frank's sentence to life imprisonment. This commutation did not save Frank's life for long, as a mob stole him from the prison in Milledgeville on August 17 and hung him a few miles outside of Marietta.³

The case against Frank was based on the testimony of Jim Conley, a Black man who worked as a janitor at the pencil factory. The case was made by Hugh Dorsey, the solicitor general of the Atlanta Judicial Circuit court.⁴ Leonard Dinnerstein, author of the book *The Leo Frank Case*, argues that Conley was certainly the actual murderer.⁵ This case caused two years of sensationalist headlines and induced fear in the Jewish community, which had assumed that such a crime could not happen to a Jewish person in America.

Much of the scholarship on the Frank case uses Dinnerstein's seminal work. Dinnerstein argues that the outrage against Frank was the result of a change in the economic model of the South from largely agrarian to industrial. Frank represented the intrusion of Northern industrialists into Southern society.⁶ In 1974, *Phylon* published an article by Eugene Levy called

³ Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

⁴ Hugh Dorsey (1871–1948) was the prosecuting attorney in the Frank trial. He was later elected governor of Georgia.

⁵ Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank*, 77.

⁶ Dinnerstein, viii.

“‘Is the Jew a White Man?’: Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913–1915.” The article discusses how the case pitted the Jewish and Black communities against each other through the figures of Frank and Conley. Levy traces the history of Black reactions to the Jewish discussion about the case to argue that when Jews and Black people are placed under stress and perceive a danger to themselves, they aim to protect their own communities first. In this case, the two communities used racist and antisemitic tropes, respectively, to support each community's claims. Levy says:

The caste mentality of both blacks and Jews generated, as we have seen, a few pleas for cooperation. However, under stress such as produced by the Frank case, blacks and Jews, each viewing themselves as at the mercy of the majority society, usually sought to protect their own. For some Jews that meant substituting the "black brute" for Leo Frank. For some blacks it meant saving Conley and allowing that "Hebrew with millions for defense behind him," to go to his death. Each group sensed its own weakness, and instinctively sought to offer up the other by emulating the prejudices of the majority.⁷

Stephen Hertzberg has a chapter about Leo Frank in his book *Strangers Within the Gate City: the Jews of Atlanta, 1845–1915*. He relies mostly on Dinnerstein, but focuses on the antisemitism of the case and the impact it had on Atlanta's Jewish community. In particular, Hertzberg notes that the German Jewish population in Atlanta was shaken from its complacency and grew to fear for its place in society.⁸ One of the most recent publications about the Frank case is the book *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South*, by Jeffrey Melnick, published in 2000. In the book, Melnick says that he “uses the example of the Leo Frank case to address the central question of Black-Jewish relations: how have African Americans and Jews been paired—as partners or competitors or some blend thereof—within the

⁷ Eugene Levy, “‘Is the Jew a White Man?’: Press Reaction to the Leo Frank Case, 1913-1915,” *Phylon* 35, no. 2 (1974): 212–22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/274709>.

⁸ Hertzberg, *Strangers*.

controlling American racial system of Black and white?”⁹ In the preface, he discusses how Black people and Jews were pitted against each other, similar to what Levy argues, and he also discusses how studying this trial provides insight into Black-Jewish relations in the early days before the civil rights movement.

The lynching of Frank created immense personal interest in the issue of lynching within the Jewish community. Furthermore, Frank’s murder caused a reversal of how Jews thought of the parallel between the Jewish and Black communities—but only after the feelings of conflict and competition between them intensified.

Old Tropes with New Purposes

Jewish reaction to the Frank lynching used many old tropes that showed continuity with previous writing about lynching. Especially pre-1903, Jewish writers emphasized the barbarous, lawless, uncivilized nature of lynching, and they expressed dismay that such a thing could happen in their era in America. Writers also blamed flaws in the justice system—rather than social forces such as racism—for lynching. These two tropes—barbarism and blaming the justice system—were recycled after Frank’s death; however, they were tied to new themes, such as discussions of antisemitism or racism, and they were adapted for different purposes.

The *Jewish Independent* in Cleveland followed previous generations of Jewish responses to lynchings by using all of the usual buzzwords. In an article titled “Georgia’s Crime,” the Frank lynching was described as “one of the most heinous among all the stories of lawlessness, anarchy and brutality ever told.” It then said that the case had “no equal in American history of crime and we doubt whether, in cold blooded, deliberately planned assassination its equal can be

⁹ Jeffrey Paul Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), ix. For additional background on the murder of Mary Phagan and the lynching of Leo Frank, see Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003).

found among the barbarous and semi-civilized people in the darkest corners of the earth.” Then it brought up an old theme in a new way: It invoked European antisemitism as a parallel to the barbarity in Georgia:

All the world was shocked at the Mendel Beilis trial. Beilis was found not guilty and even the vodka besotted moujiks respected the verdict of the court and the martyr of Kiev was permitted to go his way unmolested. Georgia, one of the family of great states, which form the enlightened American nation, committed the crime of murder under practically the same conditions.¹⁰

Parallels with Russia had been written about before in the Jewish press but, as I will discuss later in this chapter, comparisons to the Beilis trial became a familiar theme in newspaper analyses in the aftermath of the Frank lynching. Most other articles responding to the lynching used similar methods of adapting old themes. An article by Arnold W. Rosenthal in the *Jewish Criterion* also compared savagery in Europe and America. The article said, “Even the people who are fighting in war-mad Europe will be forced to stop long enough to ponder this outrageous lynching and even they whom we, in our peaceful superiority, have called savages, will be justified in expressing the bitterest contumely for the State that abetted this crime.”¹¹ A woman named Mary Blum wrote a letter addressed to President Woodrow Wilson, which was published in *The Sentinel*. In it, she linked the theme of barbarism with racism. She wrote, “It is indeed deplorable that in the twentieth century of our civilization an occurrence of this kind is possible.... There is no nation that can retain glory and honor wherein race prejudice holds sway.”¹² The theme of

¹⁰ “Georgia’s Crime,” *The Jewish Independent*, August 20, 1915, <http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/ClevelandJewishNewsFree/default.aspx?action=tab&tab=search#panel=search&search=3>.

¹¹ Arnold W. Rosenthal, “Leo M. Frank—Martyr,” *The Jewish Criterion*, August 20, 1915.

¹² Mary Blum, “In Protest of The Frank Outrage,” *The Sentinel*, August 20, 1915, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1915/08/20/01/article/10>.

barbarism in previous responses was thus repurposed after the Frank lynching because of new concerns and circumstances.

The second old trope, that of lynching as a response to faults in the justice system, also gained new life in the wake of the Frank lynching. But this trope, too, was modified. Previously, people blamed lynching on a lack of harsh penalties for certain crimes, but in this situation they blamed it on racial and religious prejudice in the justice system. Of course, in the case of lynchings of Black people, many Jews assumed the guilt of the victim, whereas in the Frank case, the Jews assumed his innocence, or at least played down the verdict of guilty.

An article in the *Jewish Voice* criticized the jury and the prosecutor in the Frank case, implying that they were out to punish Frank regardless of the actual circumstances of the crime.

This may be read as an implicit reference to antisemitism. The article said:

The Governor promises speedy justice to the malefactors; but what can even the Governor do in a state where mob-law is 'supreme lex!'; Do you wonder now that Leo M. Frank was found guilty of murder by the Georgia jury? That the Prosecuting Attorney in the State of Georgia could not possibly permit anything else than death, even in the face of the trial judge's expressed doubt of the guilt of the convicted man?¹³

The "malefactors" to which the article referred are the members of the mob, who, like the editorial supposes, were never punished. This critiques the bias in the people who are supposed to uphold the law, rather than critiquing the penal code.

A subsection of the criticism of the justice system specifically critiqued the prison guards who failed to protect Frank. The *Jewish Voice* reprinted an editorial from the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* that used both common tropes. First, it said that the Frank lynching "marks the climax of the nullification of law and government authority and the break-down of civilization in Georgia." Then it noted the lack of security in the prison: "The ease with which the mob got into

¹³ "Editorial Notes," *The Jewish Voice*, August 20, 1915.

the State prison farm and found Frank suggests the necessity of an inquiry into the conduct of the prison officials.”¹⁴

Another editorial in the *Jewish Voice* also focused on the prison guards. The article, titled “Why Was Frank Not Better Guarded,” asked, “How did it happen that the mob captured Frank and carried him away with no opposition and no danger to themselves?” The article then compared the efforts to protect Governor Slaton with the lack of protection for Frank:

It was known that a large portion of the Georgia public believed Frank should die. It was known that there were men in Georgia, and many of them, who would lynch Frank whenever the opportunity might present itself. A mob, said to have consisted of several thousand men, had threatened violence to ex-Gov. Slaton merely because he commuted Frank's sentence from death to life imprisonment; and to prevent such violence the Governor's home was hedged in with wire entanglements and guarded by a large detachment of soldiers. But Frank, the real object of all this mob hatred, Frank, the man for whose blood the Georgia lyncher thirsted, was held on a prison farm so poorly protected that half a dozen men could have captured him as easily as the mob that did the work. There seems to have been absolutely nothing resembling vigilance in the methods used to guard the prison. Stealing a man from that farm was not much more difficult than stealing a horse from a barn, and yet this prison held Frank, who was known to stand in danger of mob violence.¹⁵

The article relied on comparison, suggesting that Frank's lynching could have been prevented by heavier security, but it stopped short at answering the question posed by the title. It only said, “This may have been the result of more stupidity or it may have been something else.” It is as if the article refused to mention antisemitism or racism, as if that were too obvious. Instead, it held on to the idea that the Frank lynching was a fluke due to careless error rather than a symptom of deeper issues with the justice system.

¹⁴ “Local Editorial Expressions on Frank,” *The Jewish Voice*, August 20, 1915.

¹⁵ “Local Editorial Expressions on Frank.”

An article in the *Sentinel* called the Frank lynching a “savagely anarchistic deed,” using the words of the barbarism trope.¹⁶ The article is rather vivid in its disdain of the prison guards. It said, “The warden lies when he says that he does not know who the men were who secured his keys and took from him the man entrusted to his charge to protect whom, he should first have laid down his life. Were he capable of some of the fine feelings of the Japanese he would shoot himself.” By saying the warden was lying, the article firmly asserted that something more than stupidity caused the lynching. It spoke of the prejudice against Frank by discussing the lack of fairness in the trial:

Frank never had a chance for his life. Georgia’s refusal to give him a fair trial compelled outside interference lest it be said there is no justice in the republic. It was the outraged American sense of fairness that pleaded in Frank's behalf. And the ‘outside interference’ was offered in a friendly and helpful spirit to aid and awaken Georgia, not to embarrass or thwart her.

Although this article doesn’t specifically mention antisemitism, that seems to be what it referred to when it said that Frank never received a fair trial. The “outside interference” referred to financial and legal help supplied by Northern Jews. This article attempted to combat the antisemitic accusations against Jewish support of Frank by arguing that the trial was rigged against him—and no need to mention why that should be the case. The article was both accusatory against the violence Frank faced and defensive in protection of the Jewish community at large.

The old tropes were adapted to suit the new needs of the Jewish community in the face of the Frank lynching. The barbarism accusations served as a universalistic message in which to couch implicit claims of antisemitism. The criticisms of the justice system also framed Jewish

¹⁶ “Editorial: God vs. The State of Georgia,” *The Sentinel*, August 20, 1915, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1915/08/20/01/article/10>.

interest in the case as a more universal American claim of justice for all. And the discussion of the prison guards helped Jews show the bias in the justice system without having to explicitly name antisemitism. These tropes were the universal critiques that Jews could use to frame concerns particular to their community. It is important to note the surprise and shock that Jews expressed at the lynching, particularly at how Frank was taken from a prison. At this point, the lynching era had been going on for decades, and many Black victims had been taken from prisons. This showed a lack of Jewish interest and awareness of lynching prior to Frank, and it showed how Jews placed the lynching of Frank in a separate category than the lynching of Black people because, of course, he was one of their own.

Adaptation of Parallels

As discussed in the previous chapter, the use of parallels between Jewish and African American experiences reveals how Jews perceived lynching and race riots. These same trends continued in response to the Frank lynching, but once again, the themes were adapted to fit new circumstances and concerns. Instead of a Black lynching victim, there was a Jewish one, and the trial pitted the Jewish and Black communities against each other. The parallels Jews made reflect this radically different circumstance.

The parallels that were overlooked or unspoken are equally noteworthy, particularly the comparison to the Atlanta riot in 1906. Just nine years before Frank was lynched, the riot was a pivotal event in the history of the city, and the similar racial themes would surely seem to have merited comparison. However, Jewish writers were almost completely silent about the Atlanta riot in the wake of the Frank lynching. Jeffrey Paul Melnick addresses this surprising silence about a parallel that seems obvious; he points out that “here in Frank’s adopted hometown the

slaughter of African Americans had followed on the heels of charges that white women were being victimized sexually,” which was a similar circumstance that Frank faced. And as discussed previously, in the case of the Atlanta riot, some Jews agreed with the comparison to Kishinev and other instances of violence against Jews in Russia (although most resisted even that comparison). But in the Frank case, Melnick says:

But to use the experience of African Americans to describe that of Jews in America was resisted. It was safe, after Frank’s lynching, to say he was treated as badly as a Jew in Russia would be; it was less attractive for Jews (or even mainstream papers) to admit that a Jew was treated like an African American in Georgia. Earlier on, Leo Frank’s mother had been one of the few to make the comparison blatantly; she wrote to her son that she had heard that ‘the Jews are considered not one whit better than negroes in Atlanta.’¹⁷

Melnick writes that he only found one paper that mentioned the Atlanta riot in connection with the Frank case.¹⁸ This was an article in the St. Paul *Appeal*, a national African American newspaper titled “Anniversary of Atlanta’s Shame,” and it commented on the ninth anniversary of the riot. It connected the riot to Frank by saying, “The recent lynching of Leo Frank, a Jew, in Georgia, has aroused the country more than the murders of thousands of colored people in the South during the past twenty years.”¹⁹ I also found one article in a Jewish paper, the St. Louis *Jewish Voice*, that connected the riot and Frank, albeit before the lynching: an editorial that commented on remarks by a member of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. This person had claimed that there was no anti-Jewish prejudice in Georgia, and as proof he cited that the Jewish population of Atlanta doubled in the ten years preceding the Frank case. The writer of the editorial compared this to the Black population and the Atlanta riot to prove that antisemitism could still exist. The article said:

The fact is equally true of almost every live commercial town. It is even true of the negro population of Atlanta. Their number has steadily increased and many of them are highly

¹⁷ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 122.

¹⁸ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 146n17.

¹⁹ “Anniversary of Atlanta’s Shame,” *The Appeal*, September 25, 1915.

respected. Does this prove that there is no latent prejudice against the negro among any part of our people, or that, always and under all conditions, they receive the same consideration or the same protection of the law demanded by the dominant race? The incontestable fact is that Jew and Gentile, white man and black man, Caucasian and Mongolian, live here side by side in perfect harmony, under natural conditions, the same as in most American communities. Let these relations be subjected to some sudden strain and the dormant prejudice flares up with explosive force. Such a strain has produced race riots in Atlanta. Such a strain resulted in the kindling of smoldering prejudice against the Jew who was accused of murdering a child of the dominant race. Atlanta is no exception in this old oft-repeated and shameful drama. It has been enacted against the descendants of Abraham in many parts of the world for twenty centuries. Its cause must be traced to inexcusable ignorance, but unfortunately not all the world—not even the people of Atlanta—are yet enlightened.²⁰

Drawing the parallel to anti-Black prejudice to prove the existence of antisemitism was certainly exceptional. The vast majority of writings throughout the Frank case aimed to distance the experiences of the two groups. This is because in the Frank case, the Black community and the Jewish community were directly opposed.

Eugene Levy says that the Frank case was “the first well-focused incident of national interest in which the needs of blacks and of Jews seemed to have been in direct conflict.”²¹ This is because the two people at the center of the trial were Leo Frank and Jim Conley. Levy frames it elegantly when he asks, “Who was to be believed: Leo Frank, the Jew, or James Conley, the black man? Did Frank, a Jew, kill a Christian girl, or did Conley, a black man, kill a white girl?”²² In the course of the trial, race played a key role in the testimony of both sides. Goldstein notes that although Frank was white, the larger white society “sometimes tried to suppress the specific frustrations motivating their hatred of Frank by cloaking him in imagery usually reserved for blacks.” He shares the example of how Tom Watson (1856–1922), a Populist journalist who hugely influenced public opinion on the Frank trial, compared Frank with Black

²⁰ “Editorial Notes,” *The Jewish Voice*, March 20, 1914.

²¹ Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 212.

²² Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 213.

men who were accused of raping white women.²³ In these circumstances, it makes sense that the main Jewish reaction to this was to argue against that comparison.

Levy aptly contextualizes Jewish comments about Conley, saying, “to defend Frank one generally had to counter the evidence against him, and this usually led to an attack upon James Conley.”²⁴ However, an attack upon Conley also meant an attack upon Black people in general. Above, I had quoted Levy when he says that for some Jews, this “meant substituting the ‘black brute’ for Leo Frank.”²⁵ Levy points out a difference between the language of the major daily newspapers and the language Jewish writers used. He says that the Jewish editors generally did not use the most extreme anti-Black epithets, but they often reprinted articles from the secular papers that did. These articles described Conley as a “‘black human animal,’ ‘depraved negro,’ ‘treacherous negro,’ and ‘negro dope fiend.’” Levy explains this by saying that “[Jewish editors] seemed reluctant to engage in the kind of ‘nigger-baiting,’ and thus racism, common in the daily press, while at the same time they keenly wanted to use all means available, including anti-black statements, to aid Frank’s cause.”²⁶ For the most part, Levy says that Jews used less inflammatory (although still relatively anti-Black) phrases to describe Conley, such as “the testimony of a negro with a long police record,” “the testimony of a negro who has confessed that he was an accomplice,” or the description of Conley and Dorsey as “as black a black man and as black a white man as any accused has had to face.”²⁷

²³ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 43. Tom Watson was a Populist leader whose inflammatory newspaper commentary provoked antisemitism among the public against Leo Frank. C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=971002>.

²⁴ Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 218.

²⁵ Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 222.

²⁶ Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 219.

²⁷ Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 219.

Levy also cites an example of Jonah B. Wise (1881–1959), editor of the *American Israelite* in Cincinnati, who used this type of anti-Black language.²⁸ At first, Levy says that Wise “found it hard to believe Frank innocent for he doubted if a ‘well chosen jury of Southern men’ would have based their guilty verdict solely on the ‘unsupported testimony of a low type of negro.’” Wise had reason to believe this, for as Melnick notes, the Frank case was “the first capital case in postbellum southern history in which a ‘white’ defendant was condemned by the testimony of an African American.”²⁹ However, less than a year later, Wise changed his views on the trial and believed that the white Southerners gave so much credence to the “negro ex-convict” because of antisemitism.³⁰

Goldstein says that in the aftermath of the trial, Jews (especially those in the North) grew aware of the dangers of the Black-Jewish parallel.³¹ They realized that lynching was not just a phenomenon in the Black community; Jews could face the same dangers as Black people in America.³² This then changed the parallel that Jews were willing to draw. Rather than comparing the lynching of Frank with the lynching of Black people, they turned again to Europe. But instead of pogroms, Jewish writers pointed to two very particular cases of European antisemitism: the Beilis trial and the Dreyfus affair.

Menahem Mendel Beilis (1874–1934) was a Russian Jew accused of a blood libel charge. On March 20, 1911, the body of a twelve-year-old Russian boy was discovered in Kiev.

²⁸ Rabbi Jonah Bondi Wise was the son of Isaac Mayer Wise. He served as a pulpit rabbi as well as a leader of the Joint Distribution Committee. He was the founder of the United Jewish Appeal and advocated for the rescue of German Jews during the Holocaust. “Rabbi Jonah B. Wise Dies at 77; Was Leader of J. D. C. and U. J. A.,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), February 3, 1959, <https://www.jta.org/archive/rabbi-jonah-b-wise-dies-at-77-was-leader-of-j-d-c-and-u-j-a>; Samuel Cauman, *Jonah Bondi Wise: A Biography* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965).

²⁹ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 8.

³⁰ Levy, “Is the Jew a White Man?,” 219.

³¹ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 65.

³² Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, Judaic Studies Series (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 2.

Although the police traced the murder to a known gang of thieves, antisemitic organizations pressured authorities to blame the crime on a Jew as a blood libel. In July 1911, a lamplighter testified that he saw the twelve-year-old playing by a brick kiln, where Beilis was the superintendent. Beilis was arrested on July 21, 1911, and imprisoned for two years. His trial in Kiev took place September 25 to October 28, 1913, which was just months after Frank was arrested in Georgia for the murder of Phagan. The jury eventually found Beilis not guilty. He and his family left Kiev and moved first to Palestine, and then in 1920, to the United States.³³

Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935) was a Jewish man and a captain in the French military. In 1894, he was accused of spying for the Germans and was sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil’s Island. While he was in prison, it was found that the real culprit was another officer, Walter Esterhazy. However, the army refused to reopen the case. Emile Zola, a French novelist, published a famous letter to the president of France titled *J’Accuse* (I accuse), which argued that the government and army played into the public’s antisemitism by scapegoating Dreyfus to divert attention from their own failures. The case was eventually brought to a retrial, where he was pronounced guilty again, but his sentence was reduced to ten years. The liberal president of France, Emile Loubet, pardoned Dreyfus in response to shock and outrage from the rest of the world.³⁴

During this time some secular papers were still discussing pogroms; Melnick cites two that referenced pogroms in connection to the Frank case. But Jewish papers moved sharply away from this parallel, using the Beilis trial and the Dreyfus affair as their parallels of choice during

³³ For more information on Beilis, see Edmund Levin, *A Child of Christian Blood: Murder and Conspiracy in Tsarist Russia: The Beilis Blood Libel*, First Edition (New York: Schocken Books, 2014); Robert Weinberg, *Blood Libel in Late Imperial Russia: The Ritual Murder Trial of Mendel Beilis* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014); Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank); 1894-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³⁴ Leslie Derfler, *The Dreyfus Affair*, Greenwood Guides to Historic Events, 1500–1900 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002).

the Frank case. The similarities are obvious: All three were trials of Jewish men falsely accused based on antisemitic claims. The change in the parallel also served to make Frank appear more sympathetic. Some of these parallels, such as in an article by Richard S. Rauh in the *Jewish Criterion*, invoke the barbarism theme. He wrote, “It is little wonder that Russia with the Beiliss [sic] trial and France with the Dreyfus case, smile with diabolical joy at the stellar performance of the Model Nation of the World.”³⁵ In other cases, it is as if Beiliss and Dreyfus were inserted in place of Kishinev, but the dynamic is flipped. In 1903 and 1906, Jews argued that the atrocities in Kishinev were far worse than lynchings and the Atlanta riot in the United States. In this case, they argued the opposite: They said that what happened to Beiliss and Dreyfus was terrible but not as bad as what happened to Frank. One article said that “Beiliss, [sic] in a country of despots, was liberated.... Dreyfus, in a country where the civilization was not as far advanced as ours is at present, was restored to his post. But here in America, an innocent Jew was seized from prison and torn to pieces.”³⁶ The article in the Cleveland *Jewish Independent* that I quoted earlier, “Georgia’s Crime,” said:

All the world was shocked at the Mendel Beiliss trial. Beiliss was found not guilty and even the vodka besotted moujiks respected the verdict of the court and the martyr of Kiev was permitted to go his way unmolested. Georgia, one of the family of great states, which form the enlightened American nation, committed the crime of murder under practically the same conditions.³⁷

Although this was a complete reversal of the arguments in Kishinev, it used the same strategy. The Jews were trying to make themselves appear to be the bigger victim to gain sympathy in the press. Both times, this was in relation to the Black community. In Atlanta and Kishinev, they argued that pogroms were more devastating than lynching and riots, which was a direct

³⁵ Richard S. Rauh, “The First American Martyr,” *The Jewish Criterion*, August 20, 1915.

³⁶ “Interesting Items,” *The Jewish Voice*, August 27, 1915.

³⁷ “Georgia’s Crime.”

comparison to the Black community. In this case, the parallel itself did not involve Black people, but the arguments were used to make Frank seem more wronged as compared to the figure of Jim Conley, whom the Jewish press had to defame to defend Frank. Thus, the comparison of Frank to Beilis and Dreyfus was an implicit comparison to the Black community in that they cried out against antisemitism and used the language of racism to further their goals.

One reference to Kishinev in relation to the Frank trial is worth mentioning, particularly because this source is cited by Levy, Melnick, and Goldstein, although they don't comment on the veiled reference to Kishinev.³⁸ The article, titled "The Death of Leo M. Frank," was written by Allan Davis and published in the *Jewish Criterion*. It began by discussing the importance of law and authority as the protection of democracy, in line with the barbarism theme. It then said, "Now at least we see that there was some force in the Russian reply to American protests at the time of the Jewish massacres; that America could urge her point of view with greater effect if there were no lynchings within her own territory."³⁹ This seems to refer to the response of the Russian government after Americans expressed shock and horror at the Kishinev massacre, where Russia said that America was hypocritical because of the Southern lynchings. This article went on to say that Pennsylvanians should not look down at Georgia, as a recent lynching had occurred within that state as well.⁴⁰ Davis then said, "It must follow as the night the day that as yesterday a negro was lynched, what is to prevent a white man from being lynched tomorrow? And if one white man, why not another?" The use of the Kishinev reference, then, served to

³⁸ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 220.

³⁹ Allan Davis, "The Death of Leo M. Frank," *The Jewish Criterion*, August 20, 1915.

⁴⁰ This seems to be a reference to the lynching of Zachariah Walker in Coatesville, Pennsylvania. Walker, a Black man, had got into an altercation with Edgar Rice, a white man who worked as a security guard at a nearby mill. Walker admittedly shot and killed Rice, allegedly in self-defense. A mob later seized Walker and burned him to death in a spectacle lynching with thousands of people watching. Raymond Hyser, "A Crooked Death': Coatesville, Pennsylvania and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 54, no. 2 (n.d.): 85–102.

bolster the argument against lynching in America, including against the Black community. This is in contrast to most articles in Jewish papers that used Beilis and Dreyfus to defend Frank, rather than argue against lynching on the whole.

Whiteness and Antisemitism

In his book *The Price of Whiteness*, Eric Goldstein points out that much of the Jewish reaction to the Frank trial and lynching was an effort to prove that Jews were white. He writes that the main strategy for combating the antisemitism of the trial was, indeed, to prove their whiteness, which they saw as their key to security in America.⁴¹ The antisemitism of the trial worked in tandem with anti-Black racism to portray Frank as the criminal. Melnick states how the Frank-Conley connection showed a confluence of antisemitism and racism:

Frank and Conley were imagined by many to be in poisonously close contact with one another, apparently involved together in activities that marginalized both. Rather than the utopian possibilities so often presented by “Black-Jewish relations,” the Frank case promoted the provocative notion that the connection of Frank and Conley functioned mostly to advance illicit (or at least unhealthy) social behaviors.⁴²

However, the Jews and the Black community thought that their best strategy was to denigrate the other to prove their own worth in the eyes of the white populace.

Jewish editors did not often call out antisemitism directly. They hedged and spoke out against the uncivilized barbarity, the undermining of government authority, and the inadequacies of the justice system to mask their real fears and to universalize the Jewish struggle to gain mainstream acceptance. There were, however, two notable exceptions wherein writers explicitly mentioned anti-Jewish prejudice (but did not actually use the term ‘antisemitism’). The first was in the editorial from Jonah Wise that was previously mentioned. Wise said, “The Dorseys, the

⁴¹ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 65.

⁴² Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, x.

Browns and the Watsons⁴³ have succeeded in bringing about the murder of an innocent man because he was a Jew.”⁴⁴ The second mention was Mary Blum’s open letter to President Woodrow Wilson, in which she said, “It is the contention of all fair minded people that Leo Frank was murdered not because it was thought that he committed a crime but because he is a Jew.”⁴⁵

The main strategy for combating the antisemitism of the Frank case was not by directly calling it out, but by proving that Jews were white. This is what led to the anti-Black rhetoric when referring to Conley. It is also why Jews focused on the Beilis and Dreyfus parallels rather than parallels with other lynchings. Melnick lays out the racial landscape that Jews faced in the South, especially in comparison with their Northern counterparts:

Jews in southern cities were lodged in a social system intent on maintaining a strict Black/white division. As a result, Jews like Leo Frank were much more likely to take up whiteness as a self-concept and mode of behavior than their northern counterparts, for whom identification by intermediate racial categories was not only more available but also sometimes compulsory.⁴⁶

Goldstein also notes that in response to the Frank trial, Jews “became more convinced than ever that the key to social acceptance lay in demonstrating their ‘true colors’ as whites.”⁴⁷ This, then, was the paradigm for the Jewish responses to the Frank lynching. The strategy for defending the Jewish community, and Frank himself, lay in universalizing the Jewish experience, making Jews as a group and Frank in particular sympathetic, and thereby proving that Jews were part of the white mainstream.

⁴³ Joseph Mackey Brown (1851-1932) was a governor of Georgia and one of the leaders of the lynch mob.

⁴⁴ “Georgia’s Disgrace Complete,” *The American Israelite*, August 19, 1915.

⁴⁵ Blum, “In Protest of The Frank Outrage.”

⁴⁶ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 37.

⁴⁷ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 62.

Response of the Jewish Community

Leo Frank's lynching instilled great fear into those Jews who felt most at home in America: the assimilated German Jews. Hasia Diner says that "The Frank case loomed as the most upsetting incident of recent Jewish history in America. While it was an isolated event, it provoked the leaders and the opinion makers of the American Jewish world to doubt the security and stability of Jewish life in the United States."⁴⁸ These Jews previously held great faith in the protection of American freedom. But once Frank was, as Eugene Levy puts it, "lynched in a manner reminiscent of so many murdered blacks," that faith was shaken to its core.⁴⁹ David Levering Lewis, in his article "Parallels and Divergences: Assimilationist Strategies of Afro-American and Jewish Elites from 1910 to the Early 1930s," also echoes this theme. He says, "What made the Frank case so alarming to the Jewish leaders was that even in the South, where Jews were numerically insignificant, an established Jewish merchant could be more vulnerable than a black janitor."⁵⁰

Melnick and Lewis agree that the Frank trial was the true beginning of Black-Jewish allyship, particularly on the organizational level. Lewis lays out how before 1915, Jews were indistinguishable from "socialist WASPs" in terms of their philanthropy and support of African American causes. But after 1915 this completely changed, and Jews began to take leadership positions in African American civil rights groups.⁵¹ The Frank lynching made Jews feel

⁴⁸ Diner, *Almost Promised Land*, 6.

⁴⁹ Levy, "Is the Jew a White Man?," 222.

⁵⁰ David Levering Lewis, "Parallels and Divergences: Assimilationist Strategies of Afro-American and Jewish Elites from 1910 to the Early 1930s," *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 3 (1984): 547.

⁵¹ Lewis, "Parallels," 547.

vulnerable and afraid, when they had previously felt confident in their safety in America, and so, as Melnick puts it, they “belatedly threw in their lot with fellow-suffering African Americans.”⁵²

One of the ways this is seen in the direct response to the Frank case is a shift toward universalism, especially through use of the barbarism theme to universalize the antisemitic injustice. This became an even broader strategy at the conclusion of the case, as exemplified by a sermon given by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874–1949) at Temple Ohabai Shalom in Boston. In discussing the Frank lynching, Wise criticized the “parochial habit of crying out only when a Jew is wronged.”⁵³ Rabbi Rudolph Isaac Coffee (1878–1955)⁵⁴ commented on the Frank lynching as part of the general trend of lynching in Georgia, citing multiple statistics. However, he still pointed to the Frank lynching as somehow worse than the others because he was taken from a prison (even though Black lynching victims had been taken under similar circumstances). This showed both a desire to frame the Frank lynching in universal terms and a defensiveness to make the Jewish victim appear more sympathetic.⁵⁵ Diner notes that starting in 1915 a trend emerged where Jewish papers would share lynching statistics together with references to the Frank lynching.⁵⁶ The Frank case, then, provided a link for Jewish involvement in the conversation about lynching.

The universalization of the Frank lynching extends beyond simply discussing lynching statistics. The conversation moved much more in direct support of the Black community.

⁵² Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 39.

⁵³ “Dr. Stephen S. Wise Says ‘The Jewish Home Is in Danger.’” *The Jewish Voice*, November 5, 1915.

⁵⁴ Rabbi Coffee was a rabbi who served many pulpits over the course of his life, including Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh and Temple Sinai in Oakland. He was ordained at JTS, but was later affiliated with the CCAR. “Coffee, Rudolph Isaac,” accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/coffee-rudolph-isaac>.

⁵⁵ “Interesting Items,” August 27, 1915.

⁵⁶ Diner, *Almost Promised Land*, 95.

Immediately after the lynching, one newspaper reported that two Black men helped protect the body of Leo Frank. It said,

Negroes are the only defenders of the state's good name! A negro trusty in prison was the only one with humanity and courage to raise voice and hand after Frank had been seized. The prompt work, too, of a negro, in supplying a wagon when the body was cut down, prevented the threatened mutilation and burning of the body.⁵⁷

Rabbi Samuel N. Deinard (1873–1921)⁵⁸ wrote an article for the *American Jewish World* that combined both a universalizing message about Frank and a heightened interest in African American lynching victims. The article, titled “The Murder of Leo Frank—Lynching and Capital Punishment,” was published on September 10, 1915.⁵⁹ The article carried the old theme of barbarism throughout, with words such as “lawless,” “human beasts,” “brutalized beings,” “savagery,” etc. Deinard then went beyond the typical discussion about lynching by speaking specifically about the racial aspect of lynching. He said, “The idea has been nourished and cultivated there that members of a certain race, when accused of a certain crime, have no claim upon their fellow citizens for a fair trial.” By “certain race,” it was clear that he spoke of the Black community, and by “certain crime,” he referred to the sexual assault of white women. He went on to say:

The southerners' excuse has always been that they are doing it to negroes only in punishment for an unspeakable crime—as if a negro's life is any the less a human life, and therefore not entitled to the defense and protection of the law; as if the unspeakable crime is any more heinous than many other crimes and therefore not to be dealt with according to law. As a matter of fact Frank is not the only white person lynched, and assault upon women not the only crime thus avenged by the mob in the south.

⁵⁷ “God vs. The State of Georgia,” *The Sentinel*.

⁵⁸ Rabbi Deinard was born in Lithuania, lived in Palestine, went to school in Germany, and then worked as a rabbi in the United States. He founded the *American Jewish World* in 1915 while he was a rabbi at Temple Israel in Minneapolis. He was the first president of the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP. Deinard died suddenly of a heart attack at age forty-eight on the day of Yom Kippur. Michael G. Rapp, “Samuel N. Deinard and the Unification of Jews in Minneapolis,” *Minnesota History* 43, no. 6 (1973): 213–221.

⁵⁹ Dr. S.N. Deinard, “The Murder of Leo Frank—Lynching and Capital Punishment,” *The American Jewish World*, September 10, 1915.

In this one paragraph, he deconstructed the racism of the lynch mindset and also used the Frank example to undercut the myth of the typical lynching justification of Black people. He then took this racism to its logical conclusion, saying, “Yesterday a human being was lynched, and we were told that it was only a negro; today it is a Jew; tomorrow it will be an Italian, or a German, or a Protestant in a Catholic community, or a Catholic in a Protestant community. Where will it all end?” Similar criticisms of anti-Black racism were rare in the Jewish community before 1915. Deinard’s article showed how the tide turned immediately after the lynching of Frank, creating a transformation in Jewish discussion of lynching. There was one aspect of his article that showed continuity in the Jewish discussion of lynching pre-1915. He spoke about the failure of lynching and capital punishment to act as a deterrent of crime and then said:

The intellectual and moral condition of the negroes of the south may have been improving, there may be less idleness among them, less vagabondage, more industry. But the fact that the crime is now and then perpetrated shows that lynching is no deterrent. And this argument can be used against capital punishment itself, even if it is by due process of law.

This passage showed a benevolent paternalism toward the Black community, and a belief in some of the racist tropes about the Black criminal—tropes that had been common in Jewish writing pre-1915, though the change here is that Deinard exhibited a more positive attitude toward Black people than previous Jewish writings.

Melnick explains that the switch in attitude toward Black people could only happen after Frank’s lynching. During the trial, the Jewish community could only defend Frank by arguing for Conley’s guilt, and thus they invoked the Black criminal trope and other racist themes. After the lynching, however, there was no longer the need to implicate Conley. Melnick says:

As long as Frank lived it remained difficult for African Americans and Jews to make common cause, because to free Frank was to doom Conley. Because of the competition over the actual bodies of the two men, each group tended to describe the other as belonging to an absolutely distinct social sphere—Frank was an overprivileged capitalist and Conley was a vicious Black criminal. But with the disappearance of Frank from the physical scene—that is, with his lynching—a new vocabulary was worked out that enabled his plight, his very specifically Jewish story, to be converted into a Black story.⁶⁰

Thus, the conversation about the Frank lynching shifted to fit with pro-Black themes after Frank's death, whereas during the trial the Jewish and Black communities were pitted against one another. It is clear that Jewish interest in lynching continued to be fueled by the tragedy of the Frank trial even years later, as seen in two articles that responded to the May 1918 mass lynchings in Georgia.⁶¹ An article in *The American Jewish Review*, titled "Georgia Up to Her Old Tricks," starts by sarcastically saying that "two negroes were Invited to receive a taste of the usual Georgia, Southern hospitality." It then connected Frank to the lynchings, saying, "To citizens accustomed to the ways of civilization the news of these occasional social functions is received with horror. But we, who have sojourned in Georgia for a time, lived through the days of the memorable Frank trial and its subsequent disgraceful history cannot forget." This positioned Jews as old-timers when it came to lynching, even though they were very much late to the game. Finally, the article supported anti-lynching legislation, saying that had there been such legislation when Frank was murdered, the Jewish community could take comfort in knowing the perpetrators would have been brought to justice.⁶²

⁶⁰ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 110–111.

⁶¹ In May of 1918 in Georgia, there was a lynching spree which resulted in the lynching of thirteen Black people. Not only was this one of the largest single instances of lynching in United States history, but it involved the gruesome murder of a woman, Mary Turner (1899–1918), who was eight months' pregnant. This incident led the NAACP to advocate for the 1922 Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. Christopher C. Meyers, "Killing Them by the Wholesale: A Lynching Rampage in South Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 90, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 214–35; "May 19, 1918: Mary Turner Lynching," Zinn Education Project, accessed November 19, 2021, <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/t dih/mary-turner-lynching/>.

⁶² "Editorials: Georgia Up To Her Old Tricks," *The American Jewish Review*, May 24, 1918.

The second article was published in the *Buffalo Jewish Review* and was titled “Georgia’s Lawlessness Deserves Federal Intervention.”⁶³ The article lambasted Georgia for the “lynching fever” it experienced just a few years before the article was published. It said that all “civilized people” should take a stand against lynching. It also noted that the lynching of Mary Turner was not the first instance of the lynching of a Black woman, and brought up the example of Mary Conley, a woman who was lynched after defending her son, who was also killed.⁶⁴ This article specifically discussed lynching as violence against Black people and noted the racial injustice. However, it also brought up Frank in connection with Georgia Governor Hugh Dorsey. The article said:

For we cannot forget that Governor Dorsey was swept into the Governor's chair by the lynching sentiment of the State. Not meaning, of course, that all the people who voted for him were lynchers in practice or sentiment, but saying and meaning that without this sentiment back of him, he might still be Solicitor-General of the Atlanta circuit. We cannot forget, nor can it be denied, that his elevation to the Governorship was the direct and immediate result of the Leo Frank lynching.

These two articles do exactly what Melnick describes, which is to make Frank fit into the narrative of the anti-Black lynchings.

A few significant results of the Frank lynching also exemplified this change in Jewish attitudes toward the Black community. The first was the creation of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Four weeks after the trial, B’nai Brith (of which Frank had been an active member) created the ADL to combat prejudice. Dinnerstein notes that the idea for this group had been

⁶³ “Georgia’s Lawlessness Deserves Federal Intervention,” *Buffalo Jewish Review*, June 28, 1918.

⁶⁴ Mary Conley and her son Sam Conley worked for a white man named E.M. Melvin. Melvin had been reprimanding Sam Conley about his work, and Mary Conley intervened. Melvin began beating Mary, and in an attempt to protect his mother, Sam hit Melvin on the head with an iron scale weight. Melvin died soon after that. Sam escaped, but Mary was jailed and lynched. Ralph Ginzburg, *100 Years of Lynchings* (New York: Lancer Books, 1962), 110.

discussed for a long time, but the Frank trial pushed the Jews to action.⁶⁵ On the other side of the spectrum, the Frank case also gave rise to the second iteration of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

Although this was certainly not a Jewish response, it is worth noting, as the KKK's resurgence would later play a significant role in both Jewish and Black history during the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁶

The Frank lynching not only changed how Jews wrote about lynching; it pushed certain people to action. After the lynching, three prominent members of The Temple in Atlanta joined the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching.⁶⁷ Louis Marshall (1856–1929), Frank's principal appeals lawyer, became a member of the board of directors and the legal defense committee of the NAACP in 1923. Levy notes that Marshall's interest in the NAACP may have come directly from his work in the Frank trial. He says:

'If by accepting the honor I am making amends for my apparent neglect,' Marshall wrote the Association's president, 'I shall be very glad to consent to serve.' It was not entirely by chance that Marshall decided to make up for his 'apparent neglect,' and place his considerable talents at the services of the Association. A few months earlier the Association's lawyers had convinced the Supreme Court to reverse the death sentences of twelve Arkansas blacks, on the grounds that a mob atmosphere prevailed during their original trial. Eight years earlier Louis Marshall had tried, and failed, to convince the Court that essentially the same grounds justified a reversal of Leo Frank's conviction.⁶⁸

There was one significant person who did not speak out more after Frank's lynching: Rabbi David Marx, the rabbi at the Temple in Atlanta, where Frank had been a member. Marx, more than anyone outside of the direct family, felt the loss of Frank as a person rather than as a symbol of the Jewish community. After the lynching, he helped assist the family and traveled with

⁶⁵ Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank*, 157.

⁶⁶ Colonel William J. Simmons created the revival of the KKK out of a group called the Knights of Mary Phagan. Once Frank was lynched, this group no longer had a sense of purpose, and so Simmons stepped in to give them a new sense of purpose. Dinnerstein, 149–150.

⁶⁷ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 149.

⁶⁸ Levy, "Is the Jew a White Man?," 220.

Frank's body to New York, where he officiated at the funeral. Those close to Marx said that the lynching had an enormous effect on him, but he did not express his feelings about it, not even mentioning it in his article on Atlanta Jewry for the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*. It was said that he tried to "remove the episode from his consciousness, almost as if to say such a thing could not have happened."⁶⁹ This was in line with the response of the rest of Atlanta's German Jewish community. Mark Bauman says that this was the defining antisemitic event for that part of the Jewish community, and that "some departed the city and still others refused to discuss the case even seventy years later."⁷⁰

The Frank case was a turning point for Jewish engagement with lynching. It was the moment when Jews began to use the strategy of advocating for the Black community as a way of expressing their fear and attempting to protect against antisemitism. The old language of barbarism began to be used in concert with criticisms of the racial aspect of lynching, and Jews more freely called out the anti-Black prejudice involved. No longer did Jews try to refute any suggestion that Jews and Black people experienced the same kind of bigotry. Nevertheless, it was important for Jews to draw a distinction between what was done to Frank and what was done to Black people who were lynched. After Frank was murdered, conversations increasingly took note of the bigotry and hatred that Jews and the Black community both experienced. Ultimately, these themes would develop and grow in the years after the Frank case, as more episodes of race riots and lynchings were perpetrated on the Black community.

⁶⁹ Mark K. Bauman and Arnold Shankman, "The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2, no. 2 (1983): 57.

⁷⁰ Mark Bauman, "Role Theory and History: The Illustration of Ethnic Brokerage in the Atlanta Jewish Community in an Era of Transition and Conflict," *American Jewish History* 73, no. 1 (1983): 75.

CHAPTER 3: POST-1915

Introduction

The Jewish response to lynching and race riots entered a new era post-1915. This was, in part, due to the trauma of the Leo Frank lynching. From that point onward, Jews saw that they could be subject to the same racial hatreds as the Black community in America. But changes in the world outside of the Frank case also had a huge effect on the history of lynching, which in turn caused shifts in the Jewish response. The biggest change was America's entrance into World War I in 1917. The war precipitated a shift in the labor force, as a great many able-bodied young men left for Europe, and the industrial Northern cities required a new source of workers. This was the pull factor that initiated the Great Migration of Southern Black people to Northern cities. The push factor was, of course, lynching, Jim Crow laws, and the general culture of racism in the South. Between the two World Wars, about two million Black people left the South for the North.

This influx into Northern cities created a racially tense atmosphere. The Black community was relegated to certain segregated neighborhoods in many cities, and they still faced racial harassment and discrimination. Many white people resented the new competition for jobs, and they were generally unprepared for the change in demographics. When white soldiers came home from the war, many found that Black people had taken the industrial jobs they had previously held. African American soldiers came home from Europe, where they received much better treatment, to reenter life in racist America. All of these tensions led to several large race riots, including the Red Summer of 1919.¹ That these riots took place in the North meant that

¹ "The Great Migration (1910-1970)," National Archives, May 20, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/migrations/great-migration>. On the Red Summer of 1919, see Cameron McWhirter, *Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2011); William M. Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*

more Jews had front-row seats to the violence as witnesses, victims, and participants, particularly for the Chicago race riot of 1919. In this era, Jews were much more willing to admit a parallel between Jewish and Black experiences of racial hatred, but often Jewish writers showed a deep feeling of racial superiority.

As the rate of lynchings slowed and the Jim Crow era morphed into the civil rights era, Jewish leaders and organizations began to show a more unified position against lynching; however, this is a prime example of “too little, too late.” This gradual decline of lynching also coincided with the rise of Hitler in Europe, prompting a new enthusiasm for comparisons between racial violence against Black people in America with Jews in Europe, which completed the circle of Jewish pushback to initial suggestions of such a parallel in 1903.

Northern Race Riots

Starting in 1917, a scourge of racially motivated riots showed the Black population that the North would not provide the respite from racism that they had hoped. Certain riots were of particular interest to Jews: the race riot of East St. Louis in 1917,² the Red Summer of 1919

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Jan Voogd, *Race Riots & Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: The Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice That Remade a Nation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009).

² East St. Louis is a city in Illinois, and it sits opposite St. Louis, Missouri. In early July of 1917, white mobs attacked Black factory workers during a shift change. Up to 200 African Americans were shot, hanged, or beaten to death. Some were driven into burning buildings and died in the fires. By the end of the rioting, about 6,000 Black residents of East St. Louis—more than half of the city’s Black population—fled. “White Mobs Terrorize Black Residents in East St. Louis Riots,” accessed December 24, 2021, <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/jul/3>.

(consisting, in part, of riots in Washington, DC³; Chicago⁴; Omaha, Nebraska⁵; and Elaine, Arkansas⁶), and the Tulsa riot of 1921.⁷ For the most part, the Jewish response to all of these was similar, and I will discuss them as a group.

In a sample of newspaper articles responding to these riots, several themes were repeated from earlier eras, some themes were changed to fit new circumstances, and new themes were added due to new fears and concerns, such as World War I. The discussion will be based on three editorials, which contain most of those themes and illustrate three distinct responses. These editorials stand out for their length and depth of discussion of the race riots. All three were published in Jewish newspapers based in Chicago after the Chicago riot. The first is an editorial

³ The riot began on July 19 in Washington, DC, when rumors that Black men had sexually assaulted a white woman caused white mobs to terrorize Black neighborhoods. The mobs were led by off-duty sailors and Army veterans. Patrick Sauer, "One Hundred Years Ago, a Four-Day Race Riot Engulfed Washington, D.C.," *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/one-hundred-years-ago-four-day-race-riot-engulfed-washington-dc-180972666/>.

⁴ The Chicago riot began when two Black boys accidentally swam into a white area of Lake Michigan. A white man threw a rock at them, hitting Eugene Williams and causing him to drown. Fighting broke out when police refused to arrest the white man, and it resulted in seven days of violence across the city. Only the intervention of the Illinois National Guard put a halt to the riot, and by then, fifteen white people and twenty-three Black people had been killed. Susan Anderson-Nelson, "The Red Summer of 1919," *Chicago History Museum*, July 26, 2019, <https://www.chicagohistory.org/chi1919/>.

⁵ "After a Black man named Will Brown was accused of attempting to assault a white woman, a mob set the local courthouse on fire and pulled him from the jail. The mob beat Mr. Brown, hanged him from a telegraph post, riddled his body with bullets, and then dragged his burning corpse through the streets until it was mutilated beyond recognition. The violence soon spread into a 'riot' that destroyed property throughout Omaha's Black community." From "Lynching in America," 46.

⁶ The Elaine Massacre began when a group of Black sharecroppers held a meeting in a church to discuss how to get an increase in profits. They hired guards to protect the meeting; nevertheless, a group of white men got into a gunfight with the guards and the sharecroppers. The fighting escalated, and the governor called in local soldiers to control the Black population. Soldiers and vigilantes went on a killing spree, massacring over 200 Black men, women, and children. "The Massacre of Black Sharecroppers That Led the Supreme Court to Curb the Racial Disparities of the Justice System," *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed December 25, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/death-hundreds-elaine-massacre-led-supreme-court-take-major-step-toward-equal-justice-african-americans-180969863/>.

⁷ "In 1921, a Black elevator operator named Dick Rowland was arrested in Tulsa, Oklahoma, after a misunderstanding led to rumors that he had attacked a white woman. Though charges against Mr. Rowland were soon dropped and he was released, a white mob quickly gathered to lynch him. When the Black community banded together to help the young man leave town, the mob indiscriminately attacked the prosperous local Black residential and business district known as Greenwood. Over the next two days, the mob killed at least thirty-six Black people, displaced many more, and destroyed the once vibrant community. No member of the mob was ever convicted." From "Lynching in America."

by Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber (1862–1942),⁸ published in *The Sentinel* on August 8, 1919, a week after the riots.⁹ The second is an op-ed piece titled “Race Prejudice” by Jennie Franklin Purvin (1873–1958),¹⁰ which was published in the same issue of *The Sentinel* as Schanfarber’s editorial.¹¹ The third is an editorial titled “Pogroms and Race Riots” by Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch (1851–1923).¹² It was published in *The Reform Advocate* on August 16, 1919.¹³ I will discuss the Jewish response to the riots by analyzing the writings of Schanfarber, Purvin, and Hirsch, and by connecting their words to other Jewish articles of this era.

Schanfarber’s article represents older attitudes toward lynching and race riots, similar to what was written pre-1903. This is especially true in the way he prioritized the issues of barbarism and lawlessness over racial injustice. He said, “There is something of the cat, the tiger and hyena in all of us. Scratch us and the Tartar will show itself. Here we had been boasting of

⁸ Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber was ordained at HUC in 1886. He served several pulpits throughout his life but served the bulk of his career at Kehilath Anshe Mayriv in Chicago. He also had an interest in newspapers and edited multiple Jewish papers, including the *Chicago Israelite*, *The Sentinel* and *The Reform Advocate*. “Schanfarber, Tobias,” accessed December 25, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/schanfarber-tobias>.

⁹ Tobias Schanfarber, “Editorial,” *The Sentinel*, August 8, 1919, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1919/08/08/01/article/28/?e=-----en-20--1--img-txIN%7ctxTI-----1>.

¹⁰ Purvin was a leader in both the civic and Jewish spheres in Chicago. Her greatest accomplishment was the creation of clean and accessible beaches for swimming in Lake Michigan. Purvin was the sole woman to serve on the board of directors of the public library. She was also president of the Chicago chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and the president of the sisterhood of the Sinai congregation. “Jennie Franklin Purvin,” Jewish Women’s Archive, accessed December 25, 2021, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/purvin-jennie-franklin>.

¹¹ Jennie Franklin Purvin, “Race Prejudice,” *The Sentinel*, August 8, 1919, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1919/08/08/01/article/30>.

¹² Hirsch was born in Luxembourg and moved to the United States as a teenager when his father, also a rabbi, served a congregation in Philadelphia. He was ordained in Berlin, where he was influenced by Abraham Geiger. For most of his career, he served the Chicago Sinai Congregation and worked as the editor of *The Reform Advocate*. Hirsch represented the radical wing of Jewish Reform in America. Samuel E. Karff, “Hirsch, Emil Gustave,” Encyclopedia.com, accessed December 25, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/hirsch-emil-gustave>.

¹³ Emil G. Hirsch, “Editorial: Pogroms and Race Riots,” *The Reform Advocate*, August 16, 1919, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/refadv/1919/08/16/01/page/1/?e=-----en-20--1--img-txIN%7ctxTI-----1>.

our twentieth century civilization, when in the heart of cultured Chicago wild and destructive race riots throw us into consternation and we are all up in the air.” The difference between his article and the earlier writing is that while he acknowledged racism fostered the riot, he also decried vigilantism: “As long as there is law and as long as we have constituted authorities, no man has the right to take the law in his own hands, whether that man be white or black.” This same concern over lawlessness and barbarism pops up repeatedly in articles about the race riots that occurred during this time period. After the riot in East St. Louis, one article asked how the rest of the civilized world would view America in light of the uncivilized violence: “What can we say in defense when in answer to our charges of barbarism in Belgium, in France and elsewhere, the Teutons shall ask what of East St. Louis, what of Illinois?”¹⁴ An article on the riot in Chester, Pennsylvania,¹⁵ lamented that “The riots at Chester last week, although not so destructive of life and property as those in East St. Louis, nevertheless showed a most wanton degree of lawlessness on the part of the people involved.”¹⁶ An article later that fall showed the lack of interest in the racial aspect of the conflicts as compared to the general air of violence. The article said:

Every American who loves his country cannot but feel heartsore of a contemplation of the mob spirit which prevails in so many sections. It is not only that riot and bloodshed are concomitants of almost every strike, but that there should be such outbreaks as the recent race riots in Chicago and Washington and such occurrences as the lynching of a prisoner in custody of the authorities and burning of the courthouse at Omaha. The brutal assault and attempted murder of the mayor of that city is an incident without precedent in American history. That the chief magistrate of a great city should be assaulted and his assassination attempted by a mob while he was in the discharge of his bounden duty, is

¹⁴ “Our Shield Spotted,” *The American Israelite*, July 12, 1917.

¹⁵ Racial tensions had emerged in Chester as a result of an influx of Black working-class people. A confrontation between four Black people and a white man resulted in the death of the white man, and the resulting riots left seven people dead. Will Mack, “The Chester, Pennsylvania Race Riot (1917),” November 22, 2017, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1917-race-riot-chester-pennsylvania-1917/>.

¹⁶ “The Lesson of Chester,” *The Jewish Exponent*, August 3, 1917.

almost beyond belief. It is to be hoped that punishment will follow swiftly upon the heels of the crime, and that no malefactor will be spared.¹⁷

That the article put so much emphasis on the attempted murder of the white mayor—which, although still traumatic, did not actually result in a death—rather than the horrific murder of Will Brown or any of the other Black people who were killed in the violence shows that the interest in racial justice was only nominal, and that the paper’s real concern was on authority and rule of law. One of the responses to the Tulsa riot in 1921 also followed the older model, when it said, “The sympathy of all thinking Americans will go out to the decent citizens of Tulsa, Okla., the good name of whose city has been sullied by the brutal outbreak of the mob spirit.”¹⁸ It is important to note that all of these examples except Schanfarber’s article came from the *American Israelite*. Perhaps the editors of that paper—the sons of Isaac Mayer Wise—held more conservative, older beliefs about these issues. However, lawlessness was not a concern limited to the *American Israelite*. An article in *The Sentinel* by Rabbi Rudolph Coffee¹⁹ that discussed race riots was titled “Law and Order,” showing what his main concern was, although he also discussed the topic of racism head-on.²⁰

In her book “The Almost Promised Land,” Diner discusses this trend in the English-language publications’ reaction to riots. She says:

The English Jewish magazines all decried the “brutal outbreak of the mob spirit.” Again unlike the Yiddish newspapers, these magazines did not dwell on the bloody details but recounted briefly the flaring of riots in East St. Louis, Washington, Chicago, and Tulsa. Unlike the Yiddish newspapers, the English-language periodicals did not consistently employ the terminology of the eastern European Jewish experience. Although riots here

¹⁷ “Editorial Article 1—No Title,” *The American Israelite*, October 2, 1919, 1.

¹⁸ “Editorial Article 3—No Title,” *The American Israelite*, June 16, 1921.

¹⁹ Rabbi Coffee was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary, but was later affiliated with the Reform movement. He served many pulpits in his career, but was known for his work as a chaplain. He also served on the editorial staff of *The Sentinel*. “Coffee, Rudolph Isaac.”

²⁰ Rudolph I. Coffee, “Current Events: Law and Order,” *The Sentinel*, November 14, 1919, <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1919/11/14/01/article/26>.

were not called pogroms, nor the white mobs the “Black Hundreds,” the riots still were condemned in standard American terminology.²¹

Diner also discusses how the middle-class English papers covered lynching and riots in “cool, reserved tones.”²² In her view, the terminology of lawlessness and barbarism was a more middle-class, American response to the violence. I would add that part of the American response is to use indignation at the violence to downplay the racial injustice. Generally speaking, white American culture did not care to express outrage at the racial bigotry that was at the heart of these riots.

This leads into the second, more exceptional feature of Schanfarber’s article. The rabbi explicitly referred to the role that racism played in the riots, and he also highlighted the condescending attitude that many whites had toward Black people in America. Yet even as he highlighted the issue of racial inequities, Schanfarber revealed his own racial prejudices. He did not hide his belief in the inferiority of Black people; he said it openly and without shame, even as he was disavowing the violence of race riots. He even espoused his racist opinions in the same sentence that he argued for the equality of Black people:

We have permitted the negroes to come into our community. We must see to it that they be placed in proper surroundings and livable homes be given to them. The negro is not responsible for the color of his skin. In the ultimate analysis we must quarrel with the good Lord for making the pigment of the skin of the negro black instead of white. As Abraham Lincoln said, we need not associate with the negro nor permit our daughters to marry them, but we must give them an equal opportunity in the battle of life.

Given Schanfarber’s choice of Lincoln quote, it is not surprising that the solution to racial tension he offered was segregation, which, he said, “would meet the situation most effectively.” Many articles in this era espoused similar racist beliefs. The article about Chester attributed the

²¹ Diner, *Almost Promised Land*, 97.

²² Diner, *Almost Promised Land*, 95.

main cause of the violence to “badly behaved negroes from the South,” even though it went on to say that “there was no justification for the desperate and unlawful measures that were resorted to in order to punish them.” Similarly, an article on the Tulsa riots placed blame on Black people, saying, “No doubt the trouble originated in the criminal and lawless actions of a number of colored people.”²³ The most fascinating aspect of this racism is that these articles espouse racist beliefs about Black people while also acknowledging the racist causes of the violence. Eric Goldstein notes that although these white writers saw the violence as racist, they still did not accept social equality among the races.²⁴ In fact, Goldstein notes that one of the Jewish responses to the Chicago riot was to keep Black people from buying property in the heavily Jewish neighborhoods of Hyde Park and Kenwood in Chicago through the Hyde Park-Kenwood Property Owners’ Association.²⁵

The last notable feature of the Schanfarber article is how he revealed his ignorance of the nature of racial tension in America. One of his proposed solutions—besides segregation—was for Black and white leaders to simply sit down and discuss ways to solve the racial issues and prevent mob violence:

There ought to be a conference of the leading white and black men of the country to study this problem and get at some proper conclusion as to the best way of solving it. Certainly mob violence is not the best way. It is the worst. It means the useless destruction of life and of property. The leading men of the country both white and black should get together and decide upon what is the most practical and feasible plan.

This proposed solution raises the question of whether Schanfarber had been paying attention to the long history of racial violence in America. Other articles also reveal a stunning lack of awareness of the racial inequities that clearly sponsored the violence. The author of an article on

²³ “The Tulsa Riots,” *The Jewish Exponent*, June 17, 1921.

²⁴ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 74.

²⁵ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 66.

the riot in East St. Louis, for example, showed dismay that the police and military authorities “have so far indicated no real desire to find the instigators of this outrage and those who actually participated in it.” This writer was unaware that what he described was actually a typical aspect of lynching. The official record of lynchings often contained the phrase “at the hands of persons unknown” as a way of protecting the perpetrators.²⁶ The lack of police interest in finding the lynchers was not a surprise to anyone familiar with lynching.

Jennie Franklin Purvin’s article attempted to discuss the problem of racism with much more depth than Schanfarber’s article. However, she also espoused white supremacist beliefs, and she also used the race riot as a way to make Jews look exceptional. The first theme of the article is the parallel between the Jewish and Black experiences, which has been a familiar technique used by Jewish observers throughout these commentaries on the race riots and pogroms. Purvin began her article by setting up the parallel:

When the next call comes for help to be sent to suffering Jews in Poland and Galicia and the other dark corners of modern Europe it will ring a different sound from that which earlier appeals have intoned. Chicagoans have had a mild example during the past weeks of the treatment which our fellow Jews receive in the benighted countries abroad. We may now talk from experience when we start out to raise funds to help our own maltreated brethren.

Purvin clearly paralleled pogroms and race riots, unlike earlier Jewish writing. However, she failed to mention Black people, and rather paralleled Jews with Chicagoans to create sympathy for Jews, rather than for the Black community. She then broke down the parallel at exactly the point that she had ignored: the parallel between Jews and Black people:

Conditions are of course not absolutely parallel. What we have been called upon to countenance here at home in these days of riot and disorder has been but the work of discontented groups in sporadic localities. The law has in no wise condoned their deeds. Indeed we have been treated to a good example of what the law can do when it acts

²⁶ Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2002).

firmly and quickly and justly in behalf of persecuted citizens. When riots begin against the Jews we know that although they are not openly countenanced by the authorities of the lands in which they take place they are nevertheless looked upon sympathetically at least. In faith, only too often are they direct underhand work of the controlling powers themselves.

Thus in the opening of her article, Purvin reused a trope of an earlier era: Pogroms and race riots may be parallel, but Jews are the bigger victims. Her evidence of this was in the way that authorities in America supposedly protected the Black victims but the opposite was true in Eastern Europe, where authorities aided the mobs against the Jews—a repetition of an earlier, historically incorrect, claim. Another example of the “Jews had it worse” trope is found in an article by Dr. Samuel Gross in response to a lynching of three Black men in Duluth in 1920.²⁷ He wrote:

The issue involved in the lynching in no way affects the Jewish community directly—except inasmuch as the savage mob feeling toward the negro which expresses itself so often in lynching is very much akin to the mob feeling toward the Jew that insights to pogroms; the vast gulf that separates the two races notwithstanding.

It appears that during this post–World War I period, Jewish commentators on the race riots began to conflate Black and Jewish people through paralleling pogroms and race riots; however, they then noted, implicitly, that Jews were superior because they were white. Thus they could have the parallel both ways: They could make Jews out to be the most sympathetic victims while also making them appear superior.

The next theme in Purvin’s article is also related to the perception of Jews. She attempted to show how benevolent Jews were toward the Black population as a way of defending the

²⁷ An unsubstantiated accusation of the rape of a white teenager by Black men led police to arrest a group of Black men working for a circus. A mob took the men from jail and lynched three of them: Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie. “The Lynchings,” Minnesota Historical Society, accessed December 26, 2021, <https://www.mnhs.org/duluthlynchings/lynchings>. Dr. Samuel Gross was a prominent member of Temple Emanuel in Duluth, Minnesota. See https://archive.org/stream/apr1191303dulu/apr1191303dulu_djvu.txt.

Jewish population or proving Jewish exceptionalism. In her first mention of Black people, she said:

Yet we may distinctly hope that no Jew has failed to note the suffering of the black man in our city during his troubled hours. That an American city of great size and prosperity should have fallen to the level of race rioting is unpardonable; and probably in the ultimate each of us will be found guilty in some measure of contributing to the causes which led to the difficulty. Perhaps the slate of the Jewish portion of the population will be found cleanest in the hour of reckoning.

Purvin teetered between describing “each of us” as guilty for the racial violence, while simultaneously suggesting that the city’s Jewish citizenry behaved better than the other segments of the white community. The “us” in the phrase “each of us” seems to refer to Chicago’s white population, and she included Jews in that grouping. Yet she went on to note how exceptional the Jews were even among whites. This both universalizes Jews and, at the same time, casts them in a favorable light regarding the riots. Purvin went on to describe why exactly the Jews were so benevolent toward Black people:

We have been disposed to give all people of every color a fair chance to earn an honest living. In the ultimate it will be discovered that on the part of the Jew the negro has received his fairest treatment. This may be true in part to the good example which one of our distinguished citizens has set.²⁸ It may have its root in the fact that having been strangers ourselves in this land, even though many years ago, we know how to make room for other strangers. It may be possible that the age long tradition and teachings of the past have given us knowledge of the way in which to protect the weak and down-trodden. It may be merely our love for fair play which prompts us to take the part of the afflicted. Whatever the cause, the effect is patent, namely, that in this latest upheaval against an innocent race we have kept our hands clean.

²⁸ This assertion is undoubtedly a reference to Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932), who funded dozens of schools throughout the South to educate Black children. The first “Rosenwald School” was dedicated in Alabama in 1913, and by 1920 there were more than a dozen such institutions. For more on the Rosenwald Schools, see Stephanie Deutsch, *You Need a Schoolhouse: Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, and the Building of Schools for the Segregated South* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

Purvin took it for granted that Jews treated Black people better than the white population, and then spent much ink describing possible reasons for the benevolent culture. In fact, in an article titled “Race Prejudice,” published one week after anti-Black riots, she spent much more time extolling the virtues of Jews than discussing the anti-Black racism. This shows a concern for defending the reputation of the Jewish community above empathizing with the concerns of the Black community. She was concerned with the Black community, but her primary concern was to stress that Jews were the most virtuous segment of the general community.

This use of the Black struggle to promote the decency of the Jewish community was especially present after the Chicago riot, in part because of the Jewish victims. David Marcus and Morris Pearl were both Jewish men who died in the riot; other Jews were wounded.²⁹ In several of the articles reporting on the Jewish victims, the supposed innocence of the Jewish population was emphasized. An article in *The Denver News* reported that one of the most severely wounded Jews was Samuel Mason, a prominent attorney. The article says that “he like all the other Jews whose names appear among the casualties was an innocent victim of the fierce fighting which took place there between the colored population and the whites.”³⁰ Like Purvin’s article, it stresses the innocence of the Jews in the struggle and speaks of the fighting between the Black and white citizens as if the Jews were in a separate, ultimately superior category—as if Jews were grouped in with whites except when the white population was deemed too morally repugnant. An article in the *American Israelite* expressed indignation when the religious identification of the white Chicagoans who were the key rabblers and the most prominent of the rioters was not revealed: “Through an unpardonable oversight the newspapers failed to

²⁹ “Jewish Victims of Chicago Race Riots,” *The Jewish Monitor*, August 15, 1919.

³⁰ I.J.P.B., “Two Old Jews Killed and Many Severely Wounded in Chicago Race Riots,” *The Denver Jewish News*, August 6, 1919, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/667178961/?terms=%22race%20riot%22&match=1>.

mention the religious affiliation of the Chicago rioters. We venture to say, however, that they were not Jews.”³¹ Once again, the paper wanted to distinguish between the white population and the Jewish population to show the innocence and moral exceptionalism of Jews. An exception to this was the article by Dr. Samuel Gross, discussing the lynching in Duluth. Gross called out Jews who were part of the lynch mob, calling them “thoughtless” Jews who turned into “Pogromchiks.” Gross’s editorial was unusual because he pointed out the contradiction of Jewish particularism, when Jews were only concerned about racism when it affected Jews. He said,

If the stage or the film malign or defame the Jew the thoughtless audience applauds. The Jew himself must carry his protest against the outrage to the proper authorities. When the stage or film malign or defame another race, the thoughtless Jew—typifying only too many of us—applauds with the rest. The moral is easily found.³²

This call for universal concern was not as common as the arguments for Jewish exceptionalism.

The third theme of Purvin’s article was the tension between calling out anti-Black racism and still holding racist beliefs about the inferiority of Black people. This is similar to the racism of Schanfarber’s article; however, whereas Schanfarber showed a complete ignorance of anti-Black racism, Purvin shows some awareness of the barriers that Black people faced. Nevertheless, she still held and shared racist beliefs, even while she was clearly cognizant of racial inequities. Purvin spent much of the article discussing housing as a cause of the riot, pointing out that Black people were imported to serve the interests of industry without regard to how or where they would live. She then discussed the class and race conflict when families of Black people encroached upon previously white, working-class neighborhoods. Yet even in this analysis, she said that Black people were a “genuine menace” to hardworking white families. She also spoke condescendingly of the mental capacity of Black people, suggesting that, as a group,

³¹ “Jottings,” *The American Israelite*, August 14, 1919.

³² Dr. Samuel Gross, “Duluth in 5680,” *The American Jewish World*, September 10, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn78004468/1920-09-10/ed-1/seq-64/>.

Black people were easily taken in by wily politicians. According to Purvin, certain political factions courted the Black vote, and “the negro, never possessed of great reasoning ability on the whole, has been misled into believing that there was his new Jerusalem where at length he could assert himself, not only as the equal of the white, but even as the superior.” She also noted that the Black individual had “overstepped the bounds of propriety and conducted himself with such arrogance that it has been difficult to tolerate his manner.” However, she went on to say that they acted this way because of just provocation.

Other articles also showed an awareness of the problems of racism while concomitantly espousing racist beliefs. An article on the Red Summer riots from the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* argued that even if Black people started the riots, the “superior race” is at greater fault for acting as persecutor. The article said:

No doubt the colored people in the cities referred to have shown themselves oftentimes [sic] to be unruly, and have endangered the peace and good order of the respective communities. But even if the fault were entirely theirs in its inception the greater fault was committed when these acts were met by riot, aggressive violence and blood shed [sic]. The superior race can in no way better manifest its superiority than by eschewing all forms of violence in redressing any wrongs for which the law provides a remedy. That is in fact the very best way to demonstrate its superiority: to show that the advantages in education and enlightenment, and in the qualities that make for gentleness and peaceful disposition, have not been misplaced, and that in truth and fact they have given rise to a disposition to rely only on legal methods for the protection which society accords. The superior man never plays the part of the bully or the persecutor if his superiority is real and appreciable. There were things done by white men in Chicago and Washington in the recent riots that a Zulu or a Hottentot would be ashamed to do. Cruelty does not betoken genuine superiority. On the contrary, it places all who resort to it on the same level.³³

An editorial commenting on the Tulsa riot seemed similarly oblivious to its own contradictions. The author asserted that Black people “brought it on themselves,” yet the riot was carried out by “lawless, low-down whites.” It also noted that even though lynchings of Black people in

³³ “Race Riots in America,” *The Jewish Exponent*, August 8, 1919.

Southern states were justified because of the guilt of the victims, somehow the same logic didn't apply in the North, and "here in Tulsa and in East St. Louis and Chicago they shoot the poor devils because they happen to be black."³⁴ The common thread in all of these articles is an astonishing level of unawareness as to the inherent contradiction between condemning racism and, in the next sentence, describing Black people as being inherently inferior.

Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch's article on the Chicago riot is the most progressive of the three discussed in this chapter. Hirsch stood out in his sincere stance against anti-Black racism and his move toward sympathy with African Americans. This is particularly clear in the way he paralleled the Jewish and Black experiences. Throughout the article, Hirsch described the experiences of Jews in Poland, who faced violent, racist pogroms, and then mirrored that with the experience of Black people in the race riot in Chicago. The order of this is very important. By starting with the Jewish experience, he used the sympathy that Jews already had for the Jews of Poland and transferred that to create sympathy for Black Americans. This is a change in how the parallel was used in previous Jewish writings. Especially in the response to the Kishinev pogrom and Atlanta riots, Jews had tried to distance themselves from African Americans and deny the parallel. In later years, when Jews didn't agree with the parallel, they still tried to show how Jews were the greater victims. Hirsch did none of that. He started by discussing the bloodshed and oppression in Poland and then said, "and in the very birth land of constitutional democracy, pogroms of violent fury are raging." He then said, "Chicago has no excuse for pointing the finger of reproach at Warsaw or Lemberg. Pogrom and Race Riot are offspring of similar passions and are begotten in like ignorance and egotism."

³⁴ George W. Cohen, "Editorial Notes," *Buffalo Jewish Review*, June 17, 1921.

In this era, other articles also related pogroms and race riots to evoke sympathy for Black people. In the article from the *American Israelite* about the East St. Louis riot, it said, “Our own country has demonstrated its ability to substitute Russia as it was under the rule of the Czar and his bureaucracy by the pogrom which took place in East St. Louis last week.”³⁵ By calling the race riots pogroms and without providing caveats about how Jews faced greater oppression, this attempted to create more sympathy with African Americans.

Hasia Diner notes that the Jewish press “consistently linked the name, fate, and metaphors of Jewish life to those of African-Americans.”³⁶ She goes on to say how these newspapers would label Black people “America’s Jews,” and that they would say that Black people also experienced pogroms from Cossacks. Finally, she notes that the use of this language continued into later eras, but it all began here.

Also at this point, Jews were finally open to agreeing with and expanding upon the comparison. Unlike Purvin, who called out racial inequities only to reinforce it, Hirsch truly called out racism and spoke out against it without also speaking condescendingly of Black people. He discussed the ridiculousness of racism by comparing it to what Jews experienced, saying that race riots were:

fuel[ed] by racial antipathy and directed against those of the population whose skin happens to be of darker or lighter tint than is believed to be [a] prerequisite credential of a free and good American. Over there, it is the curvature of the nose which arouses animosity, here it is the color of the skin [,] the kink of the hair that provokes the persecutor’s fanaticism.

He also explicitly addressed the accusations that Black people somehow deserved the violence through their inferior characteristics, saying that they are not inherently inferior, and

³⁵ “Our Shield Spotted.”

³⁶ Diner, “Multiple Outsiderness,” 44.

any inferior characteristics that are perceived in that population are the result of oppression. He wrote:

Virtue and goodness are not the exclusive possession of one set of men marked off by color or creed, or national affinity from other groups. If there be found a group of inferior or arrested development, its backwardness cannot be due to natural deficiencies in moral or mental equipment. It is the arbitrary denial of full and free opportunity to grow as others were permitted to grow.

Although not many other articles from this era so fully denounced racism, it is important to note that Hirsch was not entirely unique in his uninhibited denunciation of racial injustice and inequity. Rabbi Rudolph I. Coffee, for example, denounced racism in his article on race riots, writing:

During the first ten months of this year, sixty three persons, of whom fifty nine were negroes, died as a result of mob rule. Last week, eleven colored men were sentenced to death in Arkansas for taking part in a race riot. First, Negroes are attacked in their own homes, and then, if they repel the invaders, are found guilty of murder. We are not told how many white persons were tried, much less convicted. America is yet far removed from line order.³⁷

This acknowledgement does not blame Black people for this violence, but rather blames prejudice and racism. It is interesting that Coffee's words were published in *The Sentinel* just three months after Purvin's and Schanfarber's editorials.

Finally, a third theme in Hirsch's article could be termed "Americanism." Jews used this theme in the early days of lynching to condemn violence and avoid talking about the issue of race. Hirsch, however, used it specifically to counteract racism. He talked about how democracy is incompatible with racism and that these race riots betrayed the values of America. He said that democracy "cannot confer on majorities the power to terrorize minorities" and that "Democracy without social foresight and economic forethought...is apt to fail. This is what happened in

³⁷ Coffee, "Current Events: Law and Order."

Chicago.” An article in the *American Israelite*, titled “Our Shield Spotted,” used the same language of Americanism. It said:

The Israelite holds no special brief for the colored race more than for any other, but in the sixty-three years of its existence, it is preached at all times, in season and out of season, the great American doctrines of sacredness of the human person, the inalienable rights of human beings, the doctrines laid down by the founders of the Republic.³⁸

Again, Coffee spoke similarly to Hirsch when he said that the prevention of race prejudice and racial violence is better done through Americanization.³⁹ Diner discusses that when undertaking intergroup relations, Jews often emphasize that they were concerned less with any specific group—as stated in “Our Shield Spotted”—but rather that “the beneficiary, in the largest sense, was America, and if Jews were to gain something they would do so indirectly, they maintained.”⁴⁰ This was a strategy for Jews to talk about race issues without grouping themselves with Black people and to deflect the accusation that Jews were only looking out for their own interests. Diner went on to say that “Jewish writers appealing to Jewish readers decried racism, lynching, segregation, and discrimination as violations of the American credo. By positing their arguments this way, they could at once both affirm their Americanness and condemn certain practices in America that they found morally repugnant.”⁴¹

Overall, this response to the race riots proved much more diverse than previous responses. In this era, there were different streams of Jewish responses, especially with varying degrees of affinity and sympathy toward the Black community. However, the voices of those Jews who started to denounce racism and call for equal rights for Black people began to rise.

³⁸ “Our Shield Spotted.”

³⁹ Coffee, “Current Events: Law and Order.”

⁴⁰ Diner, “Multiple Outsiderness,” 45.

⁴¹ Diner, “Multiple Outsiderness,” 35.

This was the start of a larger trend in the responses that would carry over into the rhetoric of Jews in the civil rights era.

Anti-lynching Efforts and Speech

In the later part of the lynching era, Jews began to speak out more directly and consistently against lynching and support anti-lynching legislation. This was especially true after two significant anti-lynching bills were proposed in Congress; the first was the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill of 1922, and the second was the Costigan-Wagner Bill of 1935.⁴² The move toward speaking out against lynching was part of what Diner calls “intergroup relations,” and she lays out five stages of Jewish involvement.⁴³ The third and fourth stages overlap with the end of the lynching era and encompass the transition to Jewish support of anti-lynching efforts. Diner says that the main characterization of the third era involved individual Jews—as opposed to Jewish communal institutions—supporting social change through movements and institutions, such as how Emil Hirsch and Stephen Wise engaged with NAACP as individuals rather than as leaders of Jewish institutions. In the fourth stage, which Diner calls the “golden age,” Jewish institutions began to engage in the civil rights movement. This stage took place from the postwar period until the late 1960s. These two stages can be seen playing out in the Jewish response to lynching in the 1920s through the 1940s; however, the unfortunate part of this history is that the Jewish community engaged a little too late to have a consequential effect on lynching in its Jim

⁴² “Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill,” accessed February 8, 2022, <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/legislative-milestones/dyer-anti-lynching-bill>; “Costigan-Wagner Bill,” accessed February 8, 2022, <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/legislative-milestones/costigan-wagner-bill>.

⁴³ Diner defines “intergroup relations” as “the political projects, programs, and endeavors undertaken by American Jews in which they have linked their status in the larger society with those of other groups similarly situated.” Diner, “Multiple Outsiderness,” 29.

Crow-era incarnation. Although lynchings occurred through the 1980s (and some may argue that they still occur today), the era of terror lynchings spanned 1880 to 1940.⁴⁴

As Diner notes, the third era of intergroup relations saw the beginning of individual Jews speaking out about anti-lynching efforts. Two of the most notable instances were Rabbi Jacob H. Kaplan in 1907 and Rabbi William Fineshriber in 1917. The comparison of these two incidents captures the tensions within Jewish communities and between the Jewish and non-Jewish communities, and the feelings of Jewish leadership on this issue.

Rabbi Jacob H. Kaplan (1874–1965) was ordained at Hebrew Union College in 1902. He then served Congregation Albert in Albuquerque, New Mexico, while simultaneously obtaining his doctorate from the University of Denver in 1906.⁴⁵ Kaplan spent the bulk of his career at Temple Israel in Miami, Florida, after he was compelled to leave New Mexico because he spoke out about lynching. Kaplan edited a monthly satirical magazine called *The Barbarian*, which he ran along with Reverend E.E. Crawford of the Christian Church. *The Barbarian* was modeled on a publication called *The Philistine* by Elbert Hubbard. In response to a local lynching, Kaplan wrote an irreverent article for the January 1906 edition simply titled “Lynching.”⁴⁶ There was an uproar in response, and two local newspapers, the *Albuquerque Morning Journal* and the *Albuquerque Evening Citizen*, published angry letters attacking Kaplan. The outrage was so

⁴⁴ The Equal Justice Initiative says that the peak years for terror lynching was 1880–1940. However, this does not mean that lynching stopped in 1940. One of the most infamous lynchings, the murder of Emmett Till, occurred in 1955. The lynching of Michael Anthony Donald in 1981 at the hands of the KKK is often referred to as the “last lynching.” However, some contemporary murders of Black people, such as the case of Ahmaud Arbery, have also been described as modern-day lynchings. At a prayer vigil, the Reverend Al Sharpton called Arbery’s death “a lynching in the twenty-first century.” “Lynching in America”; “Michael Anthony Donald (1961-1981),” *Black Past* (blog), November 19, 2017, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/donald-michael-anthony-1961-1981/>; “Ahmaud Arbery Murder Case ‘a Lynching in the 21st Century,’” CNN, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/10/us/al-sharpton-ahmaud-arbery-killing-trial/index.html>.

⁴⁵ “A Finding Aid to the Jacob H. Kaplan Papers. 1894-1957. Manuscript Collection No. 185,” accessed February 8, 2022, <http://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/ms/ms0185/ms0185.html>.

⁴⁶ Gunther Rothenberg, *Congregation Albert 1897-1972* (Albuquerque, NM, 1972); George B. Anderson, *History of New Mexico: Its Resources and People*, vol. 2 (Pacific States Publishing Company, 1907).

immense that the *American Israelite* reported that Kaplan's house was under police protection from threats of violence,⁴⁷ and Kaplan resigned as the rabbi of Congregation Albert only days after the article was published. It is unclear whether this was the result of discontent from within the congregation, the congregants' fear of violence, an attempt by Kaplan to protect the congregation from his own tarnished reputation—or a combination of the three.⁴⁸

Although I have not been able to locate a copy of Kaplan's article, the newspaper responses give some sense of at least the objectionable content. The editorials repeatedly stressed the perceived obscenity of the article. One editor said that "the article referred to is too dirty to be talked about in a decent newspaper," and that they could not publish many of the letters responding to the article because "the language of the article they criticize is too obscene to be admitted to our columns."⁴⁹ It seems that the main critique was about how Kaplan characterized Southerners, and Southern women in particular. One of the editorials responding to Kaplan was titled, "Rabbi Kaplan Attacks Pure Women: Of White Southern Parentage in an Uncalled-for Most Vicious Article." The author of the article, J.F. Peavy, responded to claims made by Kaplan, saying:

Rabbi, as a leader of a people, as a man, do you believe this southern white woman is proverbially lazy, incapable of doing anything, incapable of earning the salt that goes into the bread she eats? If you do, I say that if wisdom would land you among the saints you'll be sure to land in hell if this question were taken as a basis of your being judged. The southern woman is not dependent, body or soul upon any man, and does not recognize any man as her lord and master—"and this is the unvarnished truth". Hence she is not her husband's slave, his toy, his playmate and does not acquiesce in everything he does, for she recognizes that she has brains, as well as her ability, with the sweat of her brow to make her own living. There is every evidence an unwarranted lie in the assertion that the southern white woman knows and knows well the institution concubinage that exists in the south. There is no such system in existence. It is true that among some outlaws and beings not worthy of the name of men there are connections that will not bear lucid

⁴⁷ "Jottings," *The American Israelite*, January 10, 1907.

⁴⁸ Henry J. Tobias, *A History of the Jews in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).

⁴⁹ "A Brutal Barbarian," *The Albuquerque Morning Journal*, January 6, 1907.

description as there are elsewhere and among other people, but to say that the system of concubinage exists in the south is a bare-faced lie.

It can be assumed, then, that Kaplan called Southern white women lazy and dependent upon men, and perhaps he even implied that these women were part of a Southern system of “concubinage.” Peavy went on to give us clues about what Kaplan said in connection to white women and lynching. He said:

Lynching is usually laid at the feet of the south. What little is done is most usually done in defense of the white woman. Invariably they lynch white from what they lynch black when it has to do with woman. In addition to these facts, scores of others could be given to prove the absolute falsity of the article in *The Barbarian*, in what it has to do with the southern woman.⁵⁰

This perhaps means that Kaplan blamed Southern women as the root cause of lynching. Peavy was careful to note that both white and Black people were lynched to protect white women, which means that perhaps Kaplan made the point that lynching had to do with racism against Black people. Based on this article and others, it seems that Kaplan’s claim, which was seen as offensive, was that lynching was a racist act that was perpetrated under the pretext of protecting Southern white women. It is important to note that even though Kaplan may have been speaking out against lynching, this article was published in a satirical magazine. This was not a typical statement of social justice values, although the response to his article tells a lot about the distance between the views of this rabbi and the non-Jewish society, as well as how speaking out on the issue of lynching affected the standing of the Jewish community.

The incident involving Rabbi William Fineshriber (1878–1968) was of a different nature, although it was also an instance of a singular rabbi responding to a local lynching. Fineshriber was ordained from Hebrew Union College in 1900. He served pulpits in Davenport, Memphis,

⁵⁰ J.F. Peavy, “Rabbi Kaplan Attacks Pure Women,” *Albuquerque Evening Citizen*, January 5, 1907, Volume 21, No. 5 edition.

and Philadelphia.⁵¹ The lynching in question was that of Ell Persons, which occurred May 22, 1917, in Memphis.⁵² Fineshriber was disgusted by news of this incident, and at a Brotherhood meeting at the synagogue, he persuaded the congregants to adopt a resolution condemning the incident.⁵³ Fineshriber then went to C.P.J. Mooney (1865–1926), a friend of his and editor of the *Commercial Appeal*, to persuade him to publish the resolution and to write his own editorial condemning the lynching.⁵⁴ Days later, Fineshriber helped lead a group of clergy who also created a resolution condemning the lynching. After this incident, Fineshriber went on to take a stand against the Ku Klux Klan in Memphis, eventually driving them out of the city.⁵⁵

The story of Fineshriber definitely had a better result than that of Kaplan. However, when looking into the details of the actual resolutions, it seems that Fineshriber took a much gentler, more moderate approach than Kaplan, which is perhaps what made his statements more amenable to the general public. The newspaper report of the Brotherhood resolution said, “The burning was condemned as a ‘shameful thing’ and a ‘disgrace to law, order and decency of the community.’”⁵⁶ According to this report, the resolution condemned the lawlessness of the lynching but did not mention the racist aspect. The clergy’s statement also centered on the

⁵¹ “Fineshriber, William Howard,” accessed February 8, 2022, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/fineshriber-william-howard>.

⁵² A sixteen-year-old white girl named Antoinette Rappel was murdered and found decapitated. Ell Persons, a Black woodcutter who lived nearby, was assumed to be the culprit even though there was no evidence pointing to him. He was arrested, and newspapers advertised his lynching, which was held in a carnival-like atmosphere. “Ell Persons,” accessed February 8, 2022, <https://lynchingsitesmem.org/lynching/ell-persons>.

⁵³ In 1925, after the Fineshribers had moved to Philadelphia, Rabbi Fineshriber’s wife Mae Fineshriber published a fictional short story about a lynching and a rabbi’s response. Even though it is a fictional story, it seems to clearly map onto the episode of Rabbi Fineshriber responding to Ell Persons’s lynching. Mae W. Fineshriber, “Mobs and the Man: An Episode of the South,” *The Jewish Exponent*, February 13, 1925.

⁵⁴ Charles Patrick Joseph Mooney was the editor of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. Under his editorship, the paper earned a Pulitzer Prize for its unrelenting opposition to the Ku Klux Klan bigotry. See Robert Lanier, *Memphis in the Jazz Age* (Charleston: The History Press, 2021).

⁵⁵ Bauman and Kalin, *Quiet Voices*, 58.

⁵⁶ “Mob Action Condemned,” *The Commercial Appeal*, May 23, 1917.

lawlessness of the incident, but it admitted that the ministers should have preached against violence when they saw the newspapers promoting the scheduled lynching. The statement also indirectly condemned the sheriff, whom they accused of failing in his duty to protect Persons while he was arrested. The only mention of race was when the statement said that “we appeal for the continued extension of mental, moral, industrial and spiritual education of the negro as the most effective deterrents of crime,” implying that they believed Ell Persons to be a criminal.⁵⁷ In writing about this incident, Berkley Kalin noted that there were six Black ministers in attendance at the meeting of clergy, and they remained silent throughout the meeting.⁵⁸ It seemed that the main difference between Kaplan’s and Fineshriber’s statements was that Kaplan directly called out the racial aspects of lynching, whereas Fineshriber continued to shape his message around a condemnation of lawlessness and mob violence while endorsing the racial order of the day.

There were other rabbis who spoke out against lynching, albeit less dramatically than Fineshriber and Kaplan. Goldstein mentions Rabbi Alexander Lyons,⁵⁹ who condemned lynching in his sermons, and Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, who had written the extensive article discussed in this chapter about pogroms and race riots. Goldstein writes that rabbis were one of the few groups of Jews more likely to speak out against lynching because they “felt little direct social pressure from non-Jews who may have objected to such sentiments.” However, as in the case of Kaplan, they were not completely immune to social pressure from non-Jews, and many received pushback from their own congregants. Goldstein also points out that it was mainly Reform rabbis who spoke out on this topic, as the Orthodox and Conservative rabbis were either not focused as

⁵⁷ “Ministers Confess To A Dereliction,” *The Commercial Appeal*, May 25, 1917.

⁵⁸ Bauman and Kalin, *Quiet Voices*, 57.

⁵⁹ Rabbi Lyons was born in 1867. He was ordained from Hebrew Union College and served Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn. “Biographical Sketches of Rabbis and Cantors Officiating in the United States.”

much on American issues or were “too conscious of their congregants’ pursuit of social status to take a great interest in African American affairs.”⁶⁰

Starting in the 1920s, various Jewish institutions began to include anti-lynching statements in their social justice platforms. This was a sign of the transition to Diner’s fourth stage of intergroup relations. This stage also coincided with the two anti-lynching bills in Congress. In 1923, the Central Conference on American Rabbis (CCAR) submitted a social platform, and number sixteen on the list was “federal legislation against lynching.”⁶¹ In 1925, the Declaration of Principles on Social Justice from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) also mentioned federal anti-lynching legislation. In 1928, the CCAR’s Committee on Synagog Industrial Relations submitted a report with the following as the fifth point: “The Conference declares its abhorrence of lynching and denounces all who share in or abet this brutal practice. It advocates the enactment of legislation which shall make lynching a Federal offense.”⁶²

These various resolutions and statements continued into the 1930s. In 1931, at the UAHC biennial, a resolution was passed condemning lynching. Also in 1931, the Commission on Social Justice of the UAHC and the CCAR denounced lynching.⁶³ In 1932, the CCAR created a program of social justice, and lynching was number fifteen on the list. It said, “In the spirit of justice to all men, regardless of race, color or creed, we decry the mob violence of lynching and heartily condemn both the deed itself and the moral attitude which actuates or condones it.”⁶⁴ In

⁶⁰ Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, 148.

⁶¹ “The Social Platform of American Judaism,” *The American Israelite*, December 27, 1923.

⁶² Edward L. Israel, “As To Social Justice and The Central Conference Rabbis,” *The American Israelite*,

⁶³ “Educator, Rabbi and Attorney Offer Views on Society’s Modern Problems at Seminar on Industrial Relations,” *The American Israelite*,

⁶⁴ “Program of Social Justice Issued by American Rabbis,” *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, January 22, 1932.

1932, the Rabbinical Assembly (RA) in the Conservative movement put out a statement condemning a rash of lynchings in California, Maryland, and Missouri.⁶⁵ In 1935 Rabbi Milton Steinberg (1903–1950)⁶⁶ submitted a report to the RA that included a condemnation of the Senate for not passing the Costigan-Wagner anti-lynching bill.⁶⁷ In 1935 the National Council of Jewish Women included anti-lynching laws as part of its upcoming program,⁶⁸ and in 1936 the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods passed a resolution that favored the Costigan-Wagner bill,⁶⁹ and the United Synagogue of America supported it at their convention.⁷⁰ In 1938, the Inter-Racial Commission of the CCAR presented a resolution that “deplored the failure of Congress to pass the Federal anti-lynching bill, reaffirmed its previous stand in favor of it, expressed sympathy to the Negroes in their fight for equal rights.”⁷¹ And for the final time in the 1930s, the CCAR reaffirmed its support of anti-lynching legislation in 1938.⁷²

Though this list may seem long, two important things should be noted. The first is that these statements all came at a time when the number of terror lynchings was significantly

⁶⁵ “Rabbinical Assembly Condemns Lynchings,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), December 15, 1933, <https://www.jta.org/1933/12/15/archive/rabbinical-assembly-condemns-lynchings>.

⁶⁶ Steinberg was a Conservative rabbi who served at Park Avenue Synagogue for most of his career. He was the author of the popular book *As a Driven Leaf*. “Rabbi Milton Steinberg Dies Suddenly; Was Outstanding Spiritual Leader of U.S. Jewry,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), March 21, 1950, <https://www.jta.org/archive/rabbi-milton-steinberg-dies-suddenly-was-outstanding-spiritual-leader-of-u-s-jewry>.

⁶⁷ “Social Justice Urged As Aid to Synagogues,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, May 14, 1935, sec. Archive, <https://www.jta.org/1935/05/14/archive/social-justice-urged-as-aid-to-synagogues>.

⁶⁸ “The Work of The National Council of Jewish Women,” *The Southern Israelite*, November 15, 1935, Georgia Historic Newspapers, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn78003973/1935-11-15/ed-1/seq-2/>.

⁶⁹ “NFTS In Approval Of Anti-Lynching Bill For The U. S.,” *The American Israelite*,

⁷⁰ “United Synagogue Holds Rabbis Must Espouse Social Economic Justice,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (blog), March 19, 1936, <https://www.jta.org/1936/03/19/archive/united-synagogue-holds-rabbis-must-espouse-social-economic-justice>.

⁷¹ “Place for Synagogue in Unity Group Demanded At C.C.A.R. Sessions: Negroes Being ‘Used’ in Anti-Semitism, Is View Of Reform Rabbinate,” *The American Israelite*,

⁷² “Rabbis Reaffirm Right O Voice Views on Social Problems,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, June 26, 1938, sec. Archive, <https://www.jta.org/1938/06/26/archive/rabbis-reaffirm-right-o-voice-views-on-social-problems>.

declining, and the second is that the resolutions listed covered a fifteen-year period. And although these various organizations certainly included anti-lynching efforts in their platforms, it was never near the top of the list, and the anti-lynching sentiment was generally contained to these statements. Historian Cheryl Greenberg illustrates this trend toward speech rather than action with the example of the NAACP's request for support. She notes:

The [Anti-Defamation] League filed the complaints in folders labeled 'Negro Race Problems.' Until 1941 this longstanding category contained information not about civil rights violations but rather about black criticism of Jews. Available executive meeting minutes for the major Jewish agencies reveal that in this period, discussion of antiblack racism was exceedingly rare. The NAACP's attempt in 1934 to garner Jewish organizational support for the Costigan-Wagner antilynching bill failed. While individual Jews contributed, the NAACP received moral support from the NCJW and the Rabbinical Assembly, \$25 from the AJCongress, and \$100 from the AJC, far below the \$1000 it had requested. For Jewish groups the problem of the Negro was primarily the problem of black anti-Semitism.⁷³

One Jewish organization did seem to act upon this support of anti-lynching legislation. Marc Dollinger explains that the American Jewish Congress (AJC) took the lead in Jewish anti-lynching efforts. Albert E. Arent (1911–2006), chair of the AJC's executive committee,⁷⁴ and Joseph B. Robison (1907–1983), an attorney and lobbyist for the AJC,⁷⁵ both testified before Congress in favor of anti-lynching legislation.⁷⁶ Other than this, of the Jewish anti-lynching efforts, Dollinger says:

The Jewish communal campaign came years too late. Jewish efforts to provide legal protection against lynching proved symbolic at best: they did not effect meaningful change. By the early 1950s, lynching as a means to intimidate African Americans had all

⁷³ Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters*, 61.

⁷⁴ Arent was a lifelong champion for racial justice, including as a lawyer for the civil rights division of the Justice Department. "Law Firm Founder Albert E. Arent, 95," *Washington Post*, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2006/11/04/law-firm-founder-albert-e-arent-95/a92e040b-de34-4859-aed6-8ca3546d1793/>.

⁷⁵ Robison worked for the AJC for more than thirty years. He drafted civil rights and antidiscrimination statutes. "Joseph B. Robison, 70; Civil Liberties Lawyer," *The New York Times*, March 15, 1983, sec. Obituaries, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/03/15/obituaries/joseph-b-robison-70-civil-liberties-lawyer.html>.

⁷⁶ Marc Dollinger, "'Hamans' and 'Torquemadas': Southern and Northern Jewish Responses to the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1965," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, by Berkley Kalin and Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), 79.

but disappeared in the South. Antilynching legislation would have proved more effective fifty years earlier, when the number of these brutal acts reached all-time highs.⁷⁷

On the whole, then, Jews certainly were aware of the issue of lynching, and they clearly were against it. The efforts of individual rabbis were sporadic and varied in usefulness. The resolutions by Jewish organizations, with the exception of the AJC, rarely led to action. It is of course possible that Jews did not make anti-lynching efforts a higher priority because the issue was on the decline and anti-lynching legislation seemed to be going nowhere. But it is also possible that opposing lynching was just not a big social justice priority for Jews, and their concern for the Black community was not fully realized until the 1950s and 1960s, during the civil rights movement.

⁷⁷ Marc Dollinger, "'Hamans' and 'Torquemadas': Southern and Northern Jewish Responses to the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1965," in *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s*, by Berkley Kalin and Mark K. Bauman (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), 78.

CONCLUSION

In an interview about “Strange Fruit,” Michael Meeropol, one of composer Abel Meeropol’s sons, discusses the relevancy of lynching to the present moment. In a reference to the case of George Floyd, Meeropol says that the song “is going to be relevant until cops start getting convicted for murdering Black people.... When that happens, maybe then ‘Strange Fruit’ will be a relic of a barbaric past. But until then, it’s a mirror on a barbaric present.”¹ With that quote, the history of the Jewish response to lynching comes full circle. Throughout every era, the language of barbarism has stayed part of the lexicon around lynching. But while it originally was used as a way of denouncing the violence and lawlessness while sidestepping the racial injustice, the use of the quote in this modern context is a direct condemnation of anti-Black racism.

The rhetoric that Jews used in responding to lynching and race riots was created early in the lynching era, and was adapted to fit new situations. In the early days, Jews were not as certain of their own position in American society, and they did not want to do anything that would undermine the racial caste system and put themselves in the same category as the Black community, the nation’s most oppressed minority. However, Jews were drawn into responding to the parallels that secular newspapers made between the Atlanta race riot and the Kishinev pogrom. This situation was complicated by Russia’s response to the American protest against Kishinev, in which Russia pointed out the hypocrisy of American outrage while the scourge of lynching continued. Thus, Jews were in a precarious position. They had to defend their brethren in Europe by downplaying the parallel between pogroms and lynching, which unfortunately caused Jews to repeat racist tropes. They were faced with a difficult moral dilemma. Jews could speak out in support of the Black population that continually faced the scourge of lynching or,

¹ Pietsch, “Behind ‘Strange Fruit,’ Billie Holiday’s Anti-Lynching Anthem.”

alternatively, they could attempt to protect Jewish interests abroad during the worst of the pogroms. Thus, many Jews downplayed the parallels to create distance between themselves and the Black population. This shows how the Jewish response to lynching was affected by the white mainstream press, which put lynching and pogroms in the same category, and put Jews and Black people in opposition to each other. Some individual Jews actually expressed sympathy with the Black community and even spoke out against anti-Black racism—but only when they did not feel their status was threatened by the comparison with Black people. This was the case in the aftermath of the Springfield riot, when multiple Jews supported the founding of the NAACP as individuals, but not as a community.

The Leo Frank lynching of 1915 was a turning point in the conversation. It was the most significant lynching of a Jewish person in America. Before 1915, Jews argued against the parallel between lynching and European pogroms. In this new situation, Jews evoked a parallel between this specific lynching and European antisemitic violence. But this parallel was made specifically between Frank and two European Jews, Mendel Beilis and Alfred Dreyfus, and it was done to make Frank appear to be the biggest victim and to garner as much sympathy for him as possible. However, Jews eschewed comparing the Frank lynching to lynchings of Black people in America. Similarly, they avoided comparing lynchings to European pogroms, which would then call to mind the parallel with Black people in America.

The themes from 1915 were adapted for new purposes in the wake of Frank's lynching, specifically to fight against the antisemitism surrounding the Frank case. The best example is the theme of barbarism. It was adapted to universalize the prejudice Frank faced and to argue that this case was wrong not because of specifically Jewish issues, but because of universal values. The critique of the justice system was also used to couch claims of antisemitism in universal

language. Previously, lynching was blamed on the perceived failings of the prison system, but in the case of Frank, the critique of the prison guards was used to point out the antisemitism in the case without explicitly saying it. The strategy here was to say that Jews were in favor of universal justice, rather than justice only for their own people, with the hope that this would resonate with white society. The Frank case also put the Black and Jewish communities in direct competition—even more so than the comparison between the Atlanta riot and the Kishinev pogrom—because it pitted the word of a Jew, Leo Frank, against the word of a Black man, Jim Conley. The dynamic in the Frank trial was similar to the dynamic created by Russia's parallel of lynching and pogroms. Both parallels created a situation in which Jews had to oppose the Black community to defend Jews. In both instances, one of the main strategies was to make the Jews appear sympathetic and innocent in comparison to the Black community, and to reinforce the impression that Jews were part of the white majority. This meant that Jews were willing to repeat racist tropes so as to end up on the white side of the racial divide in Jim Crow America. After the lynching of Frank, though, things changed. Jews realized that it was in their best interest to support the Black community's struggle against lynching. This action would also protect against antisemitism by universalizing Frank's story and making it appear similar to that of Black lynching victims.

After 1915 there was a series of (primarily) Northern race riots, and the Jewish responses began to diversify significantly. The earlier themes were again repeated and adapted, but there was much more divergence in how Jews responded. One stream followed the earliest themes, suggesting that the Black victims were criminals and that the real issue at stake was barbarism. These articles were similar to what had been written before 1903. Another stream of writing focused on the problem of racism. However, this used the struggles of the Black community in

service of showing Jews in a good light. These articles agreed with the parallel between Jews and Black people, but they made sure to explain that Jews were both superior to Black people and were also the bigger victims in terms of bigotry. Such stipulations allowed Jews to agree with the parallel while still holding onto distinctions between the two communities. These articles also discussed the moral superiority of Jews compared to the rest of the white population because of their condemnation of racism. Thus, the authors aimed to remind their readers that Jewish moral stature was superior both to white and Black people. The third stream was the most progressive approach, and these commentators condemned anti-Black racism without using the Black community's struggles to further Jewish aims. They agreed with using the parallel of pogroms and race riots to channel Jewish sympathy for the Black struggles, but they did not try to portray Jews as superior, or argue that Jews were white, or say that Jews were against racism more than other white people. They also did not reinforce the idea that the Black victims were criminals or somehow deserved the violence perpetrated against them. This was a move toward true solidarity with the Black community, which was the precursor to the Black-Jewish alliance in the 1950s and 1960s.

Jewish organizations eventually did move toward speaking out against lynching and race riots. Before the House of Representatives passed the first anti-lynching legislation, most of the Jewish voices against lynching consisted of statements from individual rabbis. Two rabbis in particular—Rabbi Jacob Kaplan and Rabbi William Fineshriber—condemned lynching very dramatically, but the varied responses of their congregations and communities showed the limits of acceptability when speaking out on this issue: It was acceptable as long as the rabbis did not bring race into the conversation or specifically criticize white racism. Starting in the 1920s, when the first anti-lynching legislation was proposed, Jewish organizations began to include support of

anti-lynching legislation in their platforms and public statements. However, this was never near the top of their list of priorities. And these organizations did not generally go beyond issuing statements to offer more substantial support. It is possible this was because lynching was declining at this point, and more pressing issues were being raised. And indeed, this was part of the path to the coalitions of the civil rights movement, when Jewish organizations stepped up to support Black issues in a much bigger way. At this point in the history of Jewish intergroup relations, Jewish organizations' support for anti-lynching efforts may well appear to our contemporary sensibilities as too little, too late. Yet these initiatives served an important purpose; they were a stepping-stone toward the Jewish organizational involvement in the modern civil rights movement.

Throughout the years of the lynching era, and through all the different Jewish responses, there was a focus on the parallel between the Jewish experience of pogroms and other antisemitic events and the Black experience of lynching and race riots. Jews responded to this parallel differently depending on the social dynamics of each situation. This parallel had real political implications, made expressly clear in the case of Russia's accusations after protests of the Kishinev pogrom. The way Jews related to this parallel said a great deal about how they saw their own position in American society, especially compared to the Black community. In 1906, after the Atlanta riot, Jews argued against the parallel that the secular press made between Atlanta and the Kishinev pogrom. Jews felt that because of the Russian government's statement, they had to disagree with the parallel in order to advocate for the Jews of Kishinev. During the trial of Leo Frank, a parallel was made between Frank and two other Jewish individuals, Mendel Beilis and Alfred Dreyfus, in order to arouse public sympathy for Frank. After Frank's death, a new parallel was invoked: Frank was compared to African-American lynching victims—which

universalized his situation—as a strategy of fighting against antisemitism. During the period of the Northern race riots, some Jews generally agreed with the parallel or did so with the caveat that Jews were both superior to Black people and suffered more over the course of history than did the Black community. Finally, some writers agreed with the validity of this parallel without employing caveats.

In the May 2021 edition of the *Tulsa Jewish Review*, an article was published called “The Real Black Wall Street Tour” by Chief Egunwale Fagbenro Amusan.² The phrase “Black Wall Street” refers to the Black commercial district that was destroyed in the Tulsa massacre of 1921. In the article Amusan says, “We discussed the parallels between the pogrom experienced by Jewish people during our tour and the pogrom experienced by Black citizens here in Tulsa, Oklahoma.” Later in the article, Amusan advocates for using the revenue from the proposed Greenwood History Center to support living survivors of the massacre, similar to how the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Prague supports living Holocaust survivors. An article in *Haaretz* titled “Tempted to Compare anti-Semitism With Anti-Black Racism? Just Don’t,” by Bentley Addison, also discusses the parallel between these Jewish and Black experiences.³ Addison writes that a lot of Jews compare antisemitism with anti-Black racism to convince the world that antisemitism is an important issue. Addison argues against the need for this comparison, saying that “Jews need not co-opt the language or struggles of people of color in order to legitimize the very real threat that anti-Semitism poses to us.” He maintains that both antisemitism and anti-Black racism stem from white supremacy but that these experiences should not be equated, as it antagonizes Black-Jewish relations and alienates Black Jews. Addison specifically mentions how

² Chief Egunwale Fagbenro Amusan, “The Real Black Wall Street Tour,” *Tulsa Jewish Review*, May 2021.

³ Bentley Addison, “Tempted to Compare Anti-Semitism with Anti-Black Racism? Just Don’t,” *Haaretz.com*, accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-tempted-to-compare-anti-semitism-with-anti-black-racism-just-don-t-1.6896126>.

Jews often equate Eastern European pogroms with the oppression of Black people during the Jim Crow era. He argues that the reason Jews invoke this parallel is to legitimize and gain sympathy for the Jewish experience of antisemitism. This strategy happens to also go back to the Jim Crow era and was especially prevalent after the lynching of Frank. Thus the use of comparisons and parallels between the Black and Jewish communities have their origins in the Jewish discussion of lynching beginning post-Reconstruction. The parallel between lynching and pogroms is still being invoked both by the Jewish community and the Black community today. Furthermore, this parallel still has real political implications. The language of these Jewish responses to modern-day lynchings originated in the Jim Crow era, and an analysis of those themes and strategies can shed light on today's rhetoric.

As this thesis was being completed, an important milestone occurred in the history of lynching. On March 7, 2022, the Emmet Till Antilynching Act passed the Senate, making it the first federal anti-lynching legislation to be passed by both chambers of Congress after more than a century of attempts. The bill currently awaits the signature of President Biden.⁴ The history of the rhetoric around lynching is part of the path that led to this recent legislation. The way people respond to lynching has a real political impact, and it is shockingly relevant in relation to today's racial justice issues.

⁴ Emily Cochrane, "Congress Gives Final Approval to Make Lynching a Hate Crime," *The New York Times*, March 8, 2022, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/us/politics/lynching-bill-senate.html>.

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